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FROM

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THE TRIALS

OF

MARGARET LYNDSAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF SCOTTISH LIFE.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH;
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THE

TRIALS

OF

MARGARET LYNDSAY.

CHAPTER I.

THIRTY years ago there stood, under the shelter of the highest line of the Braid-hills, a cluster of cottages, remarkable for their romantic, yet homely beauty. A few intermingled sycamore and horse-chesnut trees rising in the midst of them, and seeming to belong to all alike, connected these lowly dwellings in one spirit of contentment and peace; so that they looked as if inhabited by a few families bound together by the ties of blood, and following the same quiet and retired occupation. Each had its own small garden in front, inclosed by its hawthorn and sweetbriar hedge, and humming cheerfully with its own hive of bees. Behind the hamlet was an old pasturage, not wholly cleared of furze, fern, and broom, and shaded by a wood on the hill-side, in whose thick covert the blackbirds

and linnets built their nests, and where they were heard singing, from a great distance, in the calm of the morning or evening sunlight. The rich cultivation that belongs to the neighbourhood of a large city came close up to the pastoral bounds of this almost suburban village,—and was stopt in its progress only by the nature of the ground, which, full of little dells or glens, guarded the green domain from alteration or decay.

Thus beautiful within itself, Braehead had also a command over a wide range of beauty. Between it and the city were many ancient and venerable groves, over which the Castle-rock lifted its battlements; while the long high pile of buildings terminated against the line of the rural Calton-hill and the magnificent ridge of the Salisbury Craigs. In front a thousand inclosures of variegated verdure stretched down to the dazzling Frith; and far off, to the west, were the great Highland mountains.

Little sensible, perhaps, were the simple dwellers in Braehead of the pleasures which such scenes inspire; for they were the children of labour and poverty; yet Nature wastes not her power in vain, and no doubt it mingles unconsciously with the happiness of every human heart. The rising and setting sun, as its light burnishes the cottage window, does more than merely awaken to toil, or give a welcome summons to rest—and in a country like Scotland, where thoughtful intelligence has long been the character of lowly life, it is not to be supposed that even the poorest and

most ignorant are ever wholly indifferent to the wonderful works of God.

In this hamlet lived the family of Walter Lyndsay, the narrative of whose fortunes may perhaps not be unaffecting to those who feel a deep interest in every exhibition, however humble, of the joys and sorrows, the strength and the weakness of the human heart.

Walter Lyndsay was the son of a man of education and talent, who had followed the hard and ill-requited profession of a surgeon in a small country parish, and had died, of a rapid malady, in the prime of life.—The boy had been apprenticed to a printer in Edinburgh, a friend of his father's, and having excellent talents he had been appointed foreman only a few weeks before the death of him whose last moments were made happy by thoughts of his only son's good conduct and prosperity. As his wife and that son were watching by the bed-side the approach of the fatal hour, the dying man asked Walter to read to him the nineteenth chapter of St John. As the youth's faltering voice had finished the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses, his father asked him to repeat them—and it was done.

"When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

At these words, his father folded his hands together across his breast, and that was the last perceptible motion. His wife saw she was a widow—and looked alternately towards the bed that now bore her husband's corpse, and her only son with the Bible yet unclosed upon his knees. There was no shriek in that silent room—only a few sobs and some natural tears. This widow did not belong to a faint-hearted and repining race. Her forefathers had been servants of God in tribulation and anguish,—and she had swerved not from their pure and high faith, in the midst of her own many afflictions. She went solemnly up to the clay, and kissed once and again the same dead smile,—and from that hour thought of her husband's soul in heaven, not of the mortal weeds which it had dropt to decay.

Adam Lyndsay died poor; and after his small debts and the expences of his decent funeral had been paid, it appeared that nothing remained to his widow. They had brought up respectably several children, who had all died in the bloom of youth, except Walter, and their slender means had also been diminished by various unforeseen misfortunes. Walter's kind heart was glad within him, when he saw his mother perfectly resigned in her utter destitution, and so did the widow's heart sing for joy, when her son told her, that during his lifetime she should never want, but must come and sit at her wheel, peacefully and cheerfully, by his own fire-side. She felt it was a pure and deep

happiness prepared by Nature for her soul to be supported, in her old age, by the son whom alone God had spared out of all her fair flock; and when, on that night of her widowhood, she knelt down in solitary prayer, she blessed God for that delightful and holy dependence, in which she was thenceforth to rely on her first-born.

A few days after the funeral, Walter Lyndsay went to inquire for the health of Gilbert Craig, one of his father's best friends, who had been taken ill in the church-yard during the funeral, and led away before the sods had been smoothed down over the grave. Walter met the daughter of the old man at the door, and there was no need of words to tell him that she was an orphan. Alice Craig had, from childhood, been so intimate with the family of the Lyndsays, that she considered Walter quite in the light of a brother. She now wept piteously, and would not be comforted. After an hour past in the dim and desolate house, poor Alice said to him,—" Oh! Walter, I know not what is to become of me; I have no relations but my uncle, and he, you know, does not like us. Will you speak to your mother before you go back to Edinburgh, and prevail on her to let me lodge with her as a servant? I will be careful of her and her's; and will work late and early for my bread. My father wept;—yes, forgetful of himself, he wept, a little before he died, for my sake. He prayed that your mother would be kind to me,—and made me promise that I would live with her, if she would take me, as a servant."

Walter looked at Alice as she uttered these humble words with a pale face and anxious eyes, and he thought on the strict friendship there had so long been between their dead fathers. He remembered seeing Gilbert's care-worn countenance at the funeral, overshadowed with sorrow, and touched, although he then knew it not, with the first symptoms of a mortal sickness. "Your father, Alice, got his death at my father's funeral." Her sobs were not yet suppressed,—and her sweet face was drenched in tears. Walter, after a deep pause, went up to her, and gently kissing her cheek, said,—"Yes, Alice, you shall live with my mother; but not as a servant. God bless you—I will go to my mother, and send her to you. The widow will bring comfort to the orphan."

It was at that hour Walter Lyndsay resolved to make Alice Craig his wife. She, in her simplicity, loved no one else, and did not think she had so loved even him; so, after a few months, they were married—and Walter took his wife and mother with him to Edinburgh. They had all been born in the country, and its images were silently gathered round their hearts, not to be dissevered without a painful regret. Walter's business kept him all day in the city—but his humble dwelling was now as much in the country as his father's house at Briary-bank—and, under the united care of his wife and mother, it soon became by far the prettiest of all the pretty cottages of Braehead.

Walter was but a poor man, but he was able to support his wife and mother comfortably and creditably—and in that he was rich to his heart's desire. They could sit at a frugal board—they could attend Divine service decently clad—they had even wherewithal sometimes to relieve the wants of others—poor neighbours fallen into decay—or the passing beggar, wayworn, famished, and houseless, and perhaps not less an object of human charity, because brought thus miserably low by his own follies, vices, or crimes.

CHAPTER II.

In this same Cottage they had now lived nearly sixteen years, with various fluctuations of fortune in their humble existence, but always rather above than below the world. They had married very young—and were both yet in the prime of life, now that their four children were fast growing up by their side. Margaret, the eldest, had seen her fifteenth birth-day, Laurence was a year younger, Esther eleven, and Marion ten years old.

Laurence, who had worked with his father, was a fine lively bold lad, full of fun and frolic, and liable to be carried way into idle and dangerous adventures, by very slight temptations. Yet he was a kind brother, and wished always to be a dutiful son; so that, notwithstanding his frequent failings, he had been the life and soul of the house, which never looked like itself when he chanced to be absent. But his heart lay towards a sea-life, so he allowed himself to fall into the way of the press-gang, and sailed in a frigate to the West Indies.

Esther was blind, having lost her eyes in the small-pox. That disease had sadly marred her beauty, and all the neighbours seemed at first to grieve for its loss, almost as much as that of the child's sight, for she had been singularly fair, and they all said that "there never had been such bonny blue een, as those that were now white in their sockets." But, although her beauty was gone, something even more sweet and endearing had taken its place upon her countenance. An expression of constant contentment—a faint smile, rarely overclouded, was on her cheeks and about her lips; and her voice was the sweetest ever heard. She never listened to any tune but she remembered it; and, before she was nine years old, she could sing all the old Scottish airs, many of them in a way of her own, than which nothing could be more pathetic. She was skilful even in needle-work—and in a few lessons from an ingenious blind man acquired the art of delicately plaiting almost every ornamental article that could be framed of straw. And thus did the blind child contribute her mite to the support of her parents' house.

Marion had suffered a still severer affliction. From a fever in which she had struggled between life and death, she had recovered with a stricken mind. Something had touched her brain in the mystery of that dreaming disease, and it was plain to all that she never, in this world, would be the same child as before. But there was nothing painful or repulsive about the altered creature; on the contrary, to a stranger she

seemed more than commonly pretty and engaging, and it was not till she spoke that her condition appeared. She had been a gay and intelligent girl before the fever; her forehead was open and smooth, as if full of sense and feeling; and her features, unchanged, were still fine beneath the vacant and bewildered expression that so mournfully passed along their beauty. Her parents never permitted her to stray many steps out of their sight; but she seemed generally to be happy, out or in doors. Her silence often had with it a melancholy look, but it might be the appearance and not the reality of grief, for immediately on being spoken to, she came out of these dim moods with a careless smile, and was made happy in a moment with any trifle —a flower, or an insect, or any creature that moved before her in life. Well, indeed, might she be called by a word, tenderly and pitifully applied to those so afflicted, an "Innocent;" yet now and then she made use of words, especially in her prayers, that seemed in the darkness and confusion of her few erring thoughts to give intimations of something not to be explained—something beyond the reach of her weak and bewildered reason. A clear light at times broke in transitory streaks over the twilight of her spirit—so that, in the profound meaning of that scriptural expression, her parents felt that "her life was hidden with God."

In such a family, along with much joy, there must often have been much sorrow—when little Esther lost

her eyes—and when poor Marion came out of the fever with an altered mind—and on many many other occasions besides of unavoidable trial. But, although disease had often entered the house, death had passed by, as if relenting or awed by the power of their prayers; and the blind white eyes of Esther, and the wandering words of Marion made these children objects of deeper and tenderer love, and, perhaps, even of a more soul-searching happiness.

But even although far greater afflictions had befallen this family, they might have been patiently and unrepiningly borne by the parents, for the sake of one blessing alone, bestowed upon them in the eldest daughter, Margaret. Even her own mother, although to a deeply religious heart like hers, and one also filled with all maternal solicitude, beauty seemed in a child a possession rather fitted to awaken fear than pride, sorrow than joy—even she could not look upon Margaret Lyndsay without blessing her fair face and her pleasant form. And her blind sister used to say, "Margaret, I am sure, is the bonniest lassie in a' the town, for her voice is the saftest amang them a', and when I am falling asleep in her arms at night, her breath is as sweet as that o' the violets that the gardener frae the Castle brings, when he comes for my baskets." She was good, beautiful, and happy—now that youth was dawning upon her; and after all the trials she afterwards went through, the same thing might have been said of her with equal truth; for that union was not then im-

paired, when the silver had mixed with the bright auburn of her hair, and when the joyful lustre of her hazel eyes had been dimmed by perpetual weeping of solitary and hopeless tears.

Walter's mother was still alive—now an old infirm woman, upwards of threescore and ten. She was as acute in her mind as ever, and as warm in her heart; but a palsy had stricken her some years before, and she had ever since been unable to walk. Dressed in a manner rather above, but yet most becoming her present very humble lot, she sat in her arm-chair by the fire-side, and, with her trembling withered hands and head that was slightly shaken by the effects of the malady, employed herself in knitting, or in reading her Bible, or the various histories of Scotland's Religious Martyrs. The native ease and even dignity of her manner, accompanied by the power of a strong understanding not uncultivated, and the impressive sanctity of old age, would have been seen to advantage in a much higher rank of life. Her furrowed face, her tremulous hand, and her grey-haired head moving in somewhat melancholy guise, wholly obscured any symptoms of lowly birth or demeanour and rendered her such a lady-like matron as one might have expected to see in the hereditary house of some ancient family. She belonged to a race that had suffered and died for the Covenant; and with her religion was a strong and steady light, in which all her thoughts and like outward objects distinctly defined below the s

shine. She was not religious only at the hour of morning and evening prayer, and in the house of God, when she had strength to go there; but at all times God was present with her, and her life was happy in the solemn expectation of death. Her grandchildren often stood round her knees with mingled affection, wonder, and awe, when she was relating to them true tales of the martyrs —here, beautiful Margaret, with her head glittering like a star before the old woman's faded eye-sight—there, the blind Esther, sitting with her face fixed on the speaker, as if every feature gazed—and there too, perhaps, that other harmless thing at times shedding tears, it knew not why, that were suddenly dried up again in smiles whose causeless and unintelligible lustre was even still more affecting.

Such was the Family of the Lyndsays at Braehead, where they had lived nearly sixteen years, but which they were destined soon to leave in sorrow—and for ever.

CHAPTER III.

THERE had been for several years a deeper cause heartfelt misery in this family than the ordinary cour of Nature bringing inevitable distresses; and the tin was at hand when the cup of their griefs was to l filled to the overflowing brim. Walter Lyndsay h truly loved Alice Craig when he married her; a however much his conduct now belied him, he lov her still with a tender and troubled affection. But was not a man of firm and fixed principles, and es cially he had been long wavering in his religious l lief. He had met with many clever men in his o trade who were Free-Thinkers, and he had gradua suffered deistical opinions to enter his mind, till tl had destroyed his very capacity of faith, and left l an Unbeliever, very ignorant, and even aware of ignorance, yet unwilling and unable to return to Christian creed.

After this change had taken place in the chara of his mind, his feelings towards his old pious mot which had formerly been those almost of revere

underwent a painful reversal, and he now regarded her as under the power of a delusive and savage bigotry. A sort of angry and scornful pity towards her sometimes forced its way into his heart, especially when with that maternal authority which he once had cheerfully obeyed without an effort, she rebuked him for any slight symptom of indifference or derision. In her presence he felt, for the most part, the indestructible power of her original and lofty character; but when relieved from that habitual bondage, his mind was free to wander through the dim mazes of scepticism; and then the remembrance of her most peculiar tenets and doctrines, and of her stern approbation of many terrible and questionable deeds, strengthened his doubts of the truth of the Christian system itself, with which in her soul these were all identified. The austerity of his mother's religious faith seemed to him to increase, as merely human feelings fell away from her aged spirit; and, in that uncertain and unhappy temper, he received with sourness and dissatisfaction her most earnest and solemn warnings, and beseechings, and advices—all of which, in another frame of mind, would have seemed to him what they were, most truly touching, and even sublime, in a mother within the shadow of death passionately eager of her son's salvation.

His feelings towards his wife were altogether different. She was a meek, mild, quiet, still-hearted woman, free from all selfishness, and from the sudden

power of any strong passion. She had seen, long be fore his mother, her husband's changing heart, and ha striven to win it back by unupbraiding tenderness an by unobtrusive tears. She did not represent her ow griefs—not even the situation of their family, in son respects so melancholy and helpless—as reasons to i duce her husband not to question the faith in whi he had been born, and had so long lived in happine But she spoke of the New Testament itself, and of t character of our Saviour. On such a subject, in cence, purity, and submissive serenity of soul w eloquent indeed; and sometimes, even at midnig when his disconsolate wife beseeched him to think all these holy things in the same spirit he had c done, he took her kindly to his bosom, and bade t bless her—but, although with an affectionate, not a religious heart. Her own calm and gentle faith in vine revelation was as indestructible as that of that mated, eager, and impassioned old Saint kindling the persecutions of her ancestors who had feared to bathe their hands in blood, and to repel with av ing steel the murderer and oppressor. But whe saw, day after day, that her husband's heart was proof against his mother's denunciations and her meek entreaties, she sank into a deep and settle lancholy, and had all the appearance of a perso fading away in a consumption.

There was no diminution of a wife's perfect l this almost broken-hearted creature; nay, a se

her husband's miserable state of soul made him far far dearer than ever, for a sacred terror, at times almost reaching distraction, was now rarely absent from her mind, and all the passages in Scripture foreboding evil to such as shut their eyes upon the light crowded upon her memory, and engraved themselves there in spite of her will. When the heart is miserable on account of a dearly beloved object, the face often seems as if revolted affection were the cause of its gloom. Walter began silently to himself to accuse his wife of unkindness, and when at last he so reproached her, the agony of her soul was such that she uttered not a single word, but sought to hide her unhappy face for a while from his angry eyes. Day by day, change slight and imperceptible was taking place in an intercourse, that, for so many years, had been one of uninterrupted cordiality, tenderness, and trust; and Alice felt at last, that along with his religion had gone much of his love, and that she, the bride of his youth, and the mother of his children, did not, as before, wholly and happily possess his heart.

She had but too good reason so to think; yet Walter had hitherto seldom been absolutely unkind,—never brutal; and he often threw so much gentleness into his demeanour towards her, as if repenting of his alienation, that poor Alice, at such moments, felt her heart sicken with the very joy of hope. But those bursts of tenderness came from a soul whose feelings were changed, although its conscience, as it severely knew, still remain-

ed the same. Their prayers were not now said toge-
ther on bended knees,—or seldom so; the Sabbath-da
came not now with healing under its wings, to lea
them arm in hand with their children to the House
God,—whatever their thoughts were, never were the
words of a future life, for Alice feared to speak no
to her husband of that which had formerly stolen up
their hearts in hours both of joy and affliction. Th
was no communion of their souls now,—for his
shut up in the consciousness of change, and hers
that of love unchangeable, but, alas! now nearly ho
less of him for whose sake would she gladly h
walked straight forward unto the death.

Perhaps there is a diseased pleasure in the trou
emotion of guilt that keeps the falling spirit so cl
attached to it that it loses the power of a pure
reasonable happiness, and then adheres sullenl
fiercely to the error of its ways, although it knows
lead to infamy and death. It may have been so
this infatuated man. He loved his wife and his
ren,—if not as he once loved them,—yet better
all other objects on this earth. He could not lo
memory of so many smiles, tears, joys, griefs,
words, and warm sighs of blameless delight,
many long years. He remembered them all t
well, when foolishly and wickedly absenting
from Braehead. Yet still their power to recal hi
destruction was dead and gone. It was gone n
return, till, at the approach of that awful hour, v

the old sacred emotions of the soul, which guilt may have driven away from her sanctuary, will once more, and for the last time appear, either to confound or to console, and when all low, foul, and earthly thoughts will moulder away into the damp and darkness of the grave.

Walter Lyndsay was not only a reformer in religion, but also in politics, and he had for some time been one of the Friends of the People. It was now a dark day over all Europe. Anarchy had taken the place of despotism, and Atheism trampled down superstition. The same thick and sullen atmosphere which preceded that dire earthquake in France, was spreading over this country.—The poor caught the moral contagion, and there were thousands and tens of thousands that, in the sudden blindness of that frenzy, began to mock at Christianity and its blessed symbol,—the Cross. Paine, a name doomed to everlasting infamy, undertook to extinguish religion in the hearts and on the hearths of the poor, and the writings of the ignorant blasphemer were now read at Scottish ingles instead of the "Big ha-Bible, ance their father's pride." Walter Lyndsay brought to Braehead a copy of the Age of Reason.

For some months the health of the grandmother had rapidly declined, and she had requested to be allowed to remain always in her small bed-room. So the old arm-chair, in which the famous Mr Renwick had once sat in her grandfather's house, was removed from the

place it had occupied for so many happy years, and th
dying woman wished to be left much alone. Her eye
were now almost dark,—but her hearing was little im
paired, and duly morning and evening, Margaret Lyn
say sat by the bed-side, and read to her some chapte
of the Bible. Bed-ridden and blind, she knew not th
her son had concealed below his roof a book that derid
the sufferings of our Saviour on the Cross. She w
spared that pang, although another more deadly, l
less hideous, was in preparation for her. The re
less Unbeliever yet so far respected his mother's g
hairs, that he left her on her death-bed to her B
read by Margaret's sweet voice, which, however,
durst not more than once trust himself to hear. T
too, was accidentally,—and the divine words, repe
by such a voice, and with such a face, in the ear
dying Christian,—(his own mother and his own da
ter,)—so penetrated and stabbed his soul, that, in
bitter agony of the moment, he wished that he
dead, or never had been born.

As for his wife, she felt too surely that her p
over his mind was now gone. She had been
either in malice or pity, by an anonymous fi
that her husband's affection had, for some time,
bestowed on a worthless and guilty object; and
was often so wild and angry a trouble in his
that she believed that such indeed was his guilt.
night, in a miserable and convulsive dream, he
ed out a woman's name, which she had never

before; and there seemed to be affection in the unhappy voice of his dream. She removed not her arm from around his neck,—but she knew, in her cold and heavy heart, that other arms than hers were now dearer there, and from that hour she felt her wretchedness hopeless and complete. She strove to banish the belief, but it returned with the same sickening certainty; and Alice half upbraided herself with the selfishness of that virtuous love, that made her weep more rueful tears over her husband's infidelity to herself, than even over his disbelief in Him who died to save sinners.

It was not now the same house. Blind Esther sat at her work as usual, but her singing voice was now mute. All those beautiful hymns and anthems, and all the old Scottish airs, in which love and religion seem to blend together, and the grateful heart worships God in the same strains by which it expresses the constancy and the truth of its human affections,—all now were silent. Even poor Marion sat still in a corner, and without her smiles, as if dim fears had found out some latent feeling in her heart, and struck her few words dumb. Yet it was not always thus. Walter Lyndsay sometimes yet passed whole evenings at home, which, but for the remembrance of the past, might have been almost thought happy. Then with a heart true in some of its strings to the sweet sounds of other days, he would sometimes lay his hand on Esther's head, and ask her for "an auld sang," which she, too too happy to hear again the kind request,

would warble forth in a voice quivering with delighted filial affection.

But what would have become of the whole family, if it had not been for Margaret Lyndsay? A few months ago, and she was a gay joyous creature, borne about like a butterfly by every breeze, as if happiness were her employment, and all life one long summer. But on a sudden, and without regret or sorrow, or on repining thought, she saw into the nature of her own condition, and also in some degree into her mother's melancholy; and then her former thoughtless joy seemed to be wickedness and cruelty towards her dear mother, while her whole bliss lay in all the tender and most incessant offices of filial love. To see her mother recover her health and happiness, and her father in all respects the same as before, was now the sole single passion of her heart, by day and night. In the enthusiasm of her young and innocent heart, that as yet knew not the power either of joy or of misery, she feared not that in a little time her parents would be as well as ever; and often, in the strong delusion of her yearning love, she smiled, danced, and sang for a few moments, as if there had already been a perfect reconcilement of all jarring unhappy things. In one of those moments, she went to a shelf where Paine's book was lying, into which she had once looked with disgust and terror, and ever afterwards thought of it as a loathsome toad, or still more serpent that had crawled into the house,—and

ing it down into the red embers, left it to be consumed to ashes. She soon recovered to a fear of her father's anger; but she felt that she had utterly destroyed out of existence something hideous and hateful, and that fear was of short duration. On her father's return home that evening, she told him gently what she had done; and although he frowned fiercely, yet in a few minutes he called her to him on some slight excuse, and kissed her brow. For Margaret was not yet sixteen years of age, and beautiful as an angel; and, lost man as he was, he rejoiced that his beloved daughter shuddered at the wretch who denied his Saviour and his God.

CHAPTER IV.

THE family of Walter Lyndsay had never beer rich, and hitherto at the end of a year all had beei blithe and happy, if not one single small debt re mained unpaid. Health and industry were their whol stock, and hitherto it had always yielded comp tence and comfort. The children had been taugl to read by their grandmother, and Walter himse had in the evenings instructed those who could l so instructed in writing and accounts. That w their simple cheap education. Margaret and Estl had, for several years, bought and made their o plain garments, and there never had been any thi but decent and thoughtful thrift in that calm hou hold. But for some months past, there had bee diminution, not only in those little comforts wl cheer the life of poverty, but even in the necessa of life. Walter had at last irreconcileably quarre with his employer, his father's friend; and his e ings were now scanty and irregular. No one the house complained, nor with young or old

there a single dissatisfied or sullen look. The oatmeal chest had never yet been quite empty, and they could still pay for their weekly allowance of milk. With that they were satisfied, and thus were able to preserve to the old woman in her last days those comforts which old age requires, but which, had she suspected the worst, that high-souled matron would have put away from her in disdain, and not even have allowed a fire to be lighted to warm her palsied limbs.

Alice was not without a becoming pride; and miserably poor and poorer as they now were each succeeding day, none of the neighbours had any reason to think, from what they saw, that the family was in want. Some few articles of apparel, that she had worn in better days, were sold to buy bread; but the white gown in which she was married she laid carefully aside, and every thing she had worn on that too happy day. Whatever Walter had given her, when their hearts were undissevered, seemed now sacred to her soul in its deep distress; and she would almost have thought it her duty to keep all such things, even if she and her children had been dying of hunger. It was not much that they could do for themselves. Margaret had the constant tendance of her grandmother, who might die alone, if left for an hour. Esther, although always busy, could not always dispose of her work; and the mother, broken-hearted and feeble, did what she could with her needle, but often earned only a few pence in a whole day. Yet not the less

gratefully did they say grace before and after meals; and when the Lord's Prayer was repeated, they felt the force of that request, and most humbly did they breathe it, "Give us this day our daily bread!"

In this state of things, one day Alice received a let ter from her husband, which she read, and then sa down in a stupor like a swoon. In it he informe her, "that he had been imprisoned on a charge High Treason by a timid and tyrannical Governmen but that, if executed, he should lose his head in a ju cause." Each word which he had chosen containe to his wife's ear the most horrid meanings; and the swift thoughts of fear, she already saw a scaffo red with his life-blood. The tugging palpitation her heart soon ceased in an icy coldness, and Marga supported her to her bed. The terrified girl open the little window, and the rich odours of the hone suckle and moss-roses in a moment filled the roo Her mother soon revived, but for several days unable to rise, so utterly had the sudden shock dasl her little remaining strength. She informed Marga and Esther too of their father's situation, but it to be concealed from her mother, as they all kne would kill her at once.

Margaret Lyndsay went of her own accord, knocked at the prison-door. The jailor at first loo at her with callous indifference, but when she told name, and that she had come to see her father took her in without speaking, and shut the h

gate. Margaret heard neither the hinge nor the bolt; she beheld nothing distinctly,—only steep stairs, mouldy walls, and small grated windows, as if she saw them not—till the jailor, whom she closely followed, stopt short at a cell, and in a moment she was on her father's breast.

Walter Lyndsay was not prepared for this; and his soul, which a few minutes before had been sullen, and irritated, and inflamed, suddenly misgave him, and he clasped his Margaret to his bosom, and kissed, not without tears, her white open forehead, and the softness of her neck. "Oh! father—that dreadful letter—but it is not, cannot be true—you never were guilty, I am sure, of any crime that deserved death,—and you will soon be let out of prison,—and then,—O father—father—surely you will come back to Braehead every evening, and never leave us any more."

In a few minutes, Walter Lyndsay, half ashamed of his emotions, relieved himself from his daughter, and beckoned her to sit down on the edge of his iron-bedstead, which she did in silence; for she now saw a well-dressed man in the cell, whom she had not before observed, looking on her with eyes of tenderness and compassion. She wiped away her tears, and said, with a faint smile, in answer to her father's question, that all at Braehead were supporting themselves wonderfully, and that her mother would soon be better, when she was told how well he was looking, and that he was not afraid. "She does not know I am here,

or she would have tried to rise up and come with me; for she is not very ill, only weak." The prisoner spoke tenderly, but shortly, about his wife; for there was a confusion of upbraiding and remorseful thoughts in his soul. It was not, however, possible for him to withstand the glad and sparkling beauty of his beloved daughter, as her young buoyant heart, cheered by the sight and presence of her father, even although it was in prison, sent up the flushings of filial affection and hope over all her sweet countenance, and brightened her tears with the frequently recurring light of uncontrollable smiles. There was nothing like despondency in her father's face; and the ton of his voice was firm and unfaltering. Just befor her departure, she went close up to him, whispere something into his ear, and put her hand into hi breast. He started at that whisper, and then holdin in his hand the guinea she had given him by stealt said, "No, my good child, let those who imprisoned n support me;" and Margaret saw from his frown, th she must not hope to enjoy the bliss of her filial ch rity.

It was, however, great relief to have seen her ther; and she felt assured from the extreme tendern with which he had received her unexpected embra that she was still his "dear Margaret." Without a real cause for comfort, she still felt comforted; and descending the steep winding street that led from prison towards Braehead, when a touch fell upon

shoulder, and there was the gentleman whom she saw in her father's cell. He took her affectionately by the hand—and then said that he would accompany her into the country.

Margaret felt, as they walked along, as if God had sent to her an angel from heaven. The stranger told her not to allow themselves at Braehead to be too miserable about their father, for that the charge against him could not be substantiated—that most probably he would not be tried at all; but if tried, certainly acquitted. This was enough for Margaret. She never dreamt of doubting one word this benevolent person said; and, as the sun shone out as they passed through the beautiful elm groves of the Meadows, and across the smooth verdure of Burntsfield Links, she felt happier than she had ever done before she had known such grief and such terror. Poverty—disgrace—misery—all that could happen in this world were as nothing, unworthy of one single fear, since she now believed that her father's life was not in jeopardy.

The stranger offered kindly to give her money; but she reminded him of her guinea, which she had that morning received from a lady who had always hitherto forgotten to pay for some of Esther's baskets, and said that they could all put over very well till their father was set free. She then communicated to him every particular of their situation at Braehead; but hoped he would not tell her father more than was necessary, lest it might too much distress him in his im-

prisonment. "You are a good sweet girl, Margaret, —God bless you—farewell. You say that you wil visit your father again on Thursday. I will see yo then. God bless you;" and, looking one momen around, he kissed her cheek, and returned to the cit

Margaret visited her father several times durin the next fortnight; and either in going or returni from the prison, frequently both, she was accompar ed by Mr Edwards. He was an Englishman, of profession; but entertaining, as he told her, the sa political sentiments with her father, he had forme friendship for him, and was determined to see h through his great difficulties. His manner was ki er and kinder to Margaret every day; and he e said to her on parting, "I must not kiss you more, Margaret, for I am already in love. You indeed, the prettiest little maiden in all Scotland; you are more like my daughter than my sweeth I only wish I were ten years younger for your s sake."

Margaret was in her sixteenth year; and as i cent in all her thoughts as parents could wish child to be; but she had lived among homely p and was not wholly ignorant of the sins an guilt that prevail in the world; and there was thing in Mr Edwards' behaviour this day whic plexed and disturbed her—something unlike h fatherly kindness and protection. She wishe he would not again walk with her; and sh

not say to her mother that she had seen him that day. She had a dim fear and suspicion—not perhaps of meditated guilt—for that could not enter a heart so young, so afflicted, and so disposed to natural gratitude; but of something needless and inconsistent in his constant meeting with a poor girl like her; and which did not seem quite accounted for by the interest he took in her father's situation. Her mother was now somewhat stronger; and Margaret hoped that on her next visit to the prison they might go together; and then she should have nothing evil to fear.

They did so; but they found the wretched man pacing about his cell in a state of frantic distraction. He scarcely received his wife's quiet kiss, and then in a stern voice ordered Margaret to sit down. "You did not tell me that Edwards walked home with you every day from the prison. Alice, did she tell you?" Margaret felt the error of her concealment—neither could she say that she knew it not to be wrong. She saw by her father's enraged eyes that something was connected with her walks with Mr Edwards which she did not fully understand; and, therefore, she sat quaking and mute. "The ruffian would ruin our child, Alice;" and so saying, he tore his hair, and dashed his head against the wall. "He offered me money for my Margaret, for he knew that we are desperately poor; he told me that our child loved him; and that he would make her happy and comfortable for life. A purse of gold was in my

hand; but its weight was enough to sink me down to hell. I seized the villain by the throat; but the jailor rescued him; and he left the prison but a few minutes ago. Did you see him, Margaret?"—"No, father, I did not; and I hope that God will prevent one so wicked from ever coming near us again. Oh! father, he said that your life was safe; and, therefore, di I indeed love him; but have no fears, father or mothe for me, for although I have many faults, I am and eve will be free from all thoughts of such sin." Wit these words she knelt down on the cold stone floor, wi clasped hands and uplifted eyes, and exclaimed, " God of Mercy, and Thou my gracious Redeemer, pr serve me from evil, so that my parents may never unhappy for my sake." Her sweet eyes were turn towards the vaulted stone roof of the cell; but th saw it not in the deep passion of her prayer. The s of the affectionate child looked into heaven, and see ed to prostrate itself before the footstool of God. her innocence, her Maker was to her a benign gracious Being, inhabiting eternity, yet with an ear that of an earthly benefactor, open to hear the voic earthly anguish, and the very beatings of her agit heart. Her father stood with his eyes fixed upon h she knelt, and wept, and smiled, and prayed. Su sight would have touched a heart of stone; but his not so hardly framed; and, perhaps, at that mor when he looked upon his own mortal child, a wee intercessor between him and heaven, he remem

other more awful thoughts, and shuddered to feel that they had been wilfully banished from the bosom of him a sinner.

In an hour all their various passions were apparently allayed within the cell. The father had brought himself within the shadow of an ignominious death—had denied his Saviour, and left his sweet family in poverty. There was other unrevealed sin in his heart; but neither guilt nor agony could blind him for a moment to the horror of his daughter's pollution. Tenderly—distractedly—he kissed her on leaving the cell; and, when the fair creature and his pale wan wife disappeared, and the door shut him into his solitude, he lay down upon the floor, and drenched it, as well he might, with scalding tears; for while remorse was at work within his heart, he yet knew that the future (if his life were to be saved) was to be deeper dyed in guilt even than the past, and that he had sworn unto one who had a fatal power over him frantic oaths to go open-eyed and headlong to perdition.

CHAPTER V.

True pity and compassion had been felt for the poor Lyndsays by all their neighbours, ever since Walter's imprisonment. For a while they called at the house as usual, and said nothing; but by degrees Alice found heart to speak of her husband's misfortune to those whom she most liked and respected, and their simple sympathy sometimes afforded her disconsolate mind an extraordinary relief. There were not wanting some who defended him, without knowing more of his alleged guilt, than that he wished to make things better for poor people, and more equality in the world; but his wife knew too well that Walter was a misguided and guilty man, and such justification never yielded her any pleasure. Her chief anxiety was to know from her neighbours what they heard respecting the probable issue of his trial. In that rank of life, although there is often perhaps as much truth of feeling as in any other, there is not in general much of what is called its delicacy; and, on this occasion, several scrupled not to say plainly, but solemnly, that

they feared it would go hard with Walter Lyndsay, and that his life would be taken.

At these conversations Margaret was always present; and the thought of death at all, but especially of one violent and ignominious, is more insupportably terrible to a very young heart than it ever can be to one that has had more experience of the uncertainty and worthlessness of life. Accordingly, the grave and solemn sounds of all those voices, the gloom on all those countenances, and the passionate earnestness with which the neighbours crowded together almost every hour in small knots, evidently to know if any thing farther had been heard about her father,—were never withdrawn from her imagination, and her soul fed solely on fear and terror. Her life became almost insupportable; and she felt assured, that, if her father were to be put to death, she also would die that moment, or lose her senses with grief and horror. Sometimes she indistinctly heard chance words from people passing by, who did not know her, that seemed to have dreadful reference to her father. When she looked towards the huge city from Braehead, she thought it always frowned now under black and thundery clouds—and that surely never, never had there been such a sunless summer. Her dreams were almost every night so dreadful, that she feared to go to bed; and at last she so carried into sleep itself her waking horror, that, as soon as the visionary scaffold arose with her father standing upon it, and the exe-

cutioner with his axe, she knew or hoped it to be a dream, and convulsively shrieked herself awake.

One evening, after a day darkened and disturbed by many hints, and hearsays, and rumours, each more shocking and fearful than another, Margaret walked by herself to Edinburgh for some medicine for her grandmother. On her return by a solitary footpath, it being then nearly dark, she met a man, who came suddenly out from the old grove of Burntsfield House. It was Edwards. She felt as if an evil spirit were at her side. The dead silence—the gloomy darkness—the solitariness—all struck a sort of superstitious fear into her heart which she heard beating before a word was said. She then thought over the first words of the Lord's Prayer,—but still her feet were rooted to the ground. The dark figure was close upon her; and her father's rage—her own dim fears of guilt, sin, and cruelty—her fervent prayer in the prison for deliverance from evil—and now a freezing horror that crept over and along her very bones, all joined together, sent a vague thought into her cold heart that some unearthly shape stood there in the gloominess, and that an evil spirit, perhaps the Enemy of mankind, had sought and found out his prey; so she stood gasping and motionless, as a bird under the fascination of a serpent.

"Poor girl," said Edwards, "I see you are frightened. But do not tremble—I will do you no harm.

Your father misunderstood my meaning altogether. But what will become of you—when he is dead?"

At that last word Margaret Lyndsay suddenly found her power of speech. "Since he is to die, nothing can keep my mother or myself alive—and we shall all be buried together."

"No—that cannot be. His crime is treason—and the body of a traitor is not buried."

Margaret, in the light of terror, understood his words, and almost sank to the ground.

"Your father, Margaret, is a bad man, and deserves to die. But I can save him—yes, his life is in my hands. If I appear on the day of trial, a witness for the Crown, and to save myself I should do so, no interposition can save him from judgment. But—say the word—and I will save his life."

"What word, Sir?—I will say or do any thing, so that you shed not my father's blood."

"Margaret Lyndsay, come and sit down with me on this bank, and fear nothing." He put his arm round her, and they sat down together. Such was the entire prostration of her soul, with all its dear affections, before the being whom she suddenly believed to have power over her father's life, that she let herself be pressed closely to his side, even with a feeling of guardianship and preservation. For to save her father she would have walked into the lion's den; and now, desperate as her fancies had been of this person, and wicked as she knew him to be, all fear was swal-

lowed up in filial love; and it was enough to know that he could, and perhaps would save the life of him, the thought of whose death was distraction and indescribable agony. "Tell me, tell me," said the child, "what you can do for my father, and I will bless you for ever. Yes, I will bless you, even although you be wicked in other things; and so, also, will God forgive you, for he is a God of mercy."—"You are very young, Margaret, —but maidens younger than you have been married before now. If you will marry me, I will hide myself—as I have done for some time—and your father shall not die." Margaret asked eagerly if he would save her father's life, and he answered "Yes."——"I will marry you if you do so—you will come to Braehead after my father's return there, and I will tell him who saved his life. I am a mere child, Sir—but in a year or two I will marry you—I swear it before the great God, although I know not well what I say. My father did not know you wished to marry me."

At this time Margaret Lyndsay felt a sort of shuddering horror towards him who was thus almost unintelligibly speaking to her of marriage, but a still more hideous horror of her father's execution. The whole was like the bewilderment of a dream; and when she saw the huge black cloud of the old trees so high above them, and then felt herself drawn towards the side of this terrific disposer of life and death, with what seemed an arm of iron, while all was death-like stillness and glimmering around, she made a wild

effort to leap out of the terrifying trance, and sprung suddenly to her feet. Edwards held her with a cruel grasp—and in a moment Margaret Lyndsay knew that his designs were not merciful, and that she was in the power of an unpitying ruffian.

"You must be my wife this very night, child—I will take you to my own lodgings in a secret part of the city—and you will sleep in my bosom, before witnesses—that is a marriage in Scotland." Margaret now heard his words with a different dread; for she believed now, unsuspecting though she was, that he had not the power he said over her father's fate—or, if he had, that he was too wicked to save the life of any one. All at once she recovered her breath and strength, and became courageous even to her own surprise. She remembered her prayer to God in the prison-cell, when her father warned her against the wickedness of this very monster; and even now she called upon his holy name. She believed now that she had been waylaid for some wicked and cruel end, and that, although this man might even murder her, and bury her body at the foot of one of the old trees, he had no power to bring her father to the scaffold. That belief was sudden joy; and strong in its inspiration, Margaret spoke aloud to the villain, and told him that he had not power to touch a hair of her father's head. Edwards, disappointed at this sudden return of her resolution, told her to remember no one was near, and that she was in his power to do with her what he wished.

Her tears now fell solely for herself, and although she quaked in the grasp of that unrelenting fiend, yet was her pure soul firmer and less disturbed, and she believed that God would yet save her from this evil. "The eye of God is never shut, and, though you may kill my body, you cannot touch my soul. But, O! Sir, I am very young, and am afraid to die—do not—do not hurt me. This is a terrible place, and you stand by without speaking, but with a dreadful face. Dark as the night is, I see it is dreadful. Oh spare me, spare me, a poor, young, and, on the whole, not a wicked child!" And so shrieking out these words, Margaret fell down, nearly in a swoon—and then, half recovering herself, prayed for what she had just feared, instant death.

Two black shadows advanced from among the trees, and loud hoarse angry voices were on her ear. In a few minutes she found that Edwards was in the hands of the officers of justice. "Well, Mr Spy, we have nabbed you in spite of all your skulking. You have friends who are as good traitors as yourself, but it was not right in a reformer to seize a mere child like this in a dark wood for violence, and perhaps murder."—"The child of that fool, Walter Lyndsay, as I am a Christian and a thief-catcher. Margaret, did you meet him here by appointment?" Margaret, overpowered by the joy of her sudden rescue, was still lying upon the ground. One of these rude and boisterous men lifted her up, saying, "I hae a bit lassie o' my ain at hame;" and,

blessing God for her deliverance, Margaret hurried away along the foot-path, and in a short time was at Braehead, by the bed-side of her grandmother.

CHAPTER VI.

WALTER LYNDSAY was never brought to trial. It appeared that he had been made the dupe of designing men in a superior station; and as some of them were under indictment of High Treason, the poor printer was liberated from prison. The heavy nailed door was opened, and he was turned out into the street without a single hiss or huzza, and unobserved by the few persons passing along on their own business.

The infatuated man had not the virtue to go straight to his own family at Braehead. Perhaps he was ashamed to show himself to the neighbours in day-light, skulking home in contempt and poverty; so, at least, he tried to persuade himself, and said inwardly, that it was better to wait till the dusk of the evening—but that was not the cause of his conduct. He then walked sullenly down a narrow lane near the prison, and ascending a dark narrow winding stone-stair, knocked at a garret-door. It was cautiously opened by a female hand, and he entered that room in which he had first become a hopeless and infatuated sinner.

The woman who had lived for some months in this garret, had been either the wife or the mistress—(she said the wife)—of one of Walter's brother Reformers. He had treated her with great brutality, and having once struck her a blow on the bosom, Walter chid him, and thereby excited first his anger, and then his jealousy. But there is no need to give the history of Walter's unfortunate and wicked connection with this beautiful but unprincipled female. Suffice it to say, that her husband left her, and that this weak man, believing that her desertion had been owing solely and entirely to himself, thought he was bound in honour, for by this time he had abandoned his religion, to give her protection, if he could not give her support. She loved him with a violent and engrossing passion, for Walter Lyndsay was a handsome man, and his manner and deportment far above the common level. Nor was she without talents, and something that was amiable about her disposition; she had also a fine person, a face singularly elegant, and a natural fascination that seemed just adapted to seduce into sin a mind and a heart so distracted, and it may almost be said, so depraved as those of Walter Lyndsay had been for two or three years. She indeed loved him better than she did any other man, and she had been faithful to her paramour, even in uttermost destitution of the common necessaries of life. Of his wife and family she never had suffered him to speak; at their names her eyes seemed to burn with shame, anger,

and hatred, and then would overflow with bitter and scalding tears. To her bosom he had now gone on his liberation from prison, and he told her truly that he had not yet spoken a word to any one else since he had left his cell. She embraced him eagerly, and pressed his body to her's—both emaciated—for a garret had been her prison, and if pride had made Walter abstemious in his cell, so had necessity kept from her lips all but water and a crust.

The jailor had put into Walter's hand, as he let him out of the prison, a couple of guineas, which he had got for that purpose from some one of the more generous reformers. So the wretched pair had a love-feast, regaled themselves with meat and wine, and were merry. They swallowed them in recklessness and despair, with ghastly laughter between, and fatal embraces. All the world seemed changed for ever to the eyes of Walter Lyndsay. His character and credit were utterly ruined in Edinburgh,—he saw no possibility of being able to support his family by any exertion there,—his domestic peace had long been destroyed,—entirely, as he felt, by his own guilt. She, for whom he had made that wretched sacrifice, had her arms round his neck, and her cheek on his;—and long infatuated, and now maddened by a thousand passions, he started up, and offered to go with her to some distant place—to live, if they could, by his trade, however poorly,—if they could not,—to die of starvation. "The sooner the better, perhaps, we die," groaned

out Walter; "but let us swear never to part till that hour—Let us swear, not by the Bible, on which fools may pledge their faith, but on your forehead,—and on mine, which is rending with pain, but which may this night ache no more, when resting, as it has often done, upon your bosom." They grasped each other by the hands,—vowed eternal truth,—and agreed to take their departure next day. Meanwhile, he said he would go to Braehead and bid farewell to his family, to prove to her the inflexible determination of his heart. Love, vanity, pride, madness, delusion, and sin heaved the breast of the friendless, forlorn, deserted, impassioned, and beautiful woman, at these evil and wicked words; and fearless now of the power of his wife and children, she offered to accompany him to Braehead—to wait at a little distance till he came back to her from his farewell to the inmates—and then to go with him to face poverty and death.

It was late when he reached the door of his own house,—and had not his brain been inflamed with wine into a temporary madness, there was not wickedness enough in his breast to have suffered him to put his desperate purpose into execution. He violently threw open the door, and entered with a face on which the flush of debauchery looked fearful on the wan and ghastly hue brought there by the blue damps of a stone-cell. Alice and Margaret were sitting together, beside a small turf fire; but neither of them could move on this great and sudden joy. They had known

he was not to die; but they had expected everlasting expatriation. Now he stood before them in his own house—by the light of his own fire—and their hearts died within them. A sigh—a groan—a gasp, was his only welcome. He well knew the cause of such silence, but he determined to misunderstand it, that he might, by his own injustice and cruelty, fortify the savage resolution of his soul. "What kind of a reception is this for a husband or a father returning from long, cruel, and unjust imprisonment? But it matters not. I am come hither for a few minutes to say farewell to you all. Edinburgh is no place for me. You both know that I will send you all the money I can. But I must leave this to-night. So, wife, give me your hand:—I hope you are glad I am set free."

These words struck upon their hearts just as they were recovering from the shock of joy. They both hung down their heads, and, covering their faces with their hands, both sorely wept. The infatuated man sat down between them, and spoke with a little more gentleness. But still his words were so hurried, and his looks so wild, that each thought within herself, that his confinement or his liberation had affected his reason; and both likewise hoped, that, for a little while only, it might be even so. But soon they were sure that he was lost to them, perhaps for ever; for there came a sterner expression over his countenance; and in speaking of his departure, he used fewer words, but these were calm, unequivocal, and resolved. "I

have sworn, and I will keep to my oath, in face of persecution, and poverty, and death, to leave this accursed Edinburgh, and all that belong to it. I will send you money when I can. But you have been able to support yourselves for some time. Alice—don't attempt to utter one word.—I will, and must go.—What, Margaret, will you dare to lift up a look or a word against your father?" Margaret had risen from her stool, on which she had for years sat at night by her father's knees. But his stern voice stopt her, as she was about to take his hand, and beseech him not to leave them all in despair. She remained motionless, with her pale and weeping face leaning towards him, almost in fear, while her mother sat still, covering her face, and knowing, in the darkness of her sight and her soul, that all was lost.

At that moment, all eyes were turned from the fitful glimmering of the peat-fire, towards the door of the small room in which the old woman lay, and which seemed slowly opening of itself. "God have mercy upon us!" said Walter Lyndsay, as his mother, who had been so long bed-ridden and palsy-stricken, came trembling and tottering towards them, with her long grey locks hanging over her dim eyes and withered cheeks, and her hands held up in angry and melancholy upbraiding of her sinful son. "If thou leavest thy wife and children, Walter, take with thee the curse of thy mother, along with the curse of thy conscience, and the curse of thy God!" And with these words, she,

who had, till this moment, been for years a palsied cripple, fell down upon the floor, and, without motion or groan, lay as if she were dead.

It all past in a moment of wonder and amazement; but the apparent corpse was soon lifted up and laid upon its bed. Alice and Margaret were busy in trying to restore her to life—hoping it might be but a swoon, from the grievous fall. Her miserable son, seeing that she was dead, rushed out of the house, with her curse yet shrieking in his ears,—and knew that, in this world, his misery was perfect.

CHAPTER VII.

MARGARET LYNDSAY, as soon as she missed her father by the bed-side, flew out of the little room, and thence into the open air, with a palpitating bosom. She saw no figure; but, listening intensely, she heard the sound of hurried steps, which she instantly pursued. She soon caught sight of his shadow, and then discovered her father distractedly plunging down into one of the little broomy glens that intersected the slope of the hill. Onwards she flew as on wings, passionately calling upon him; but he was so lost in the multitude of the miserable thoughts within him, that he heard not his daughter's voice. Of his own accord he stopt abruptly in the little hollow which his children had named "The Lintwhite's Nest,"—when Margaret, springing down the bank, half on her knees, and half clinging round him, cried out,—"O father! father! my dearest father—come back—come back, I beseech you in the name of the Almighty; for my grandmother is dead, and my mother herself white as ashes, and as like death as the dear old woman!"

The wretched man stood speechless, but frowning. He had hoped that he had escaped from the power of that dreadful scene, and was left at liberty to rush into destruction. But as he flew, in distraction, from his mother's curse, he was arrested by his daughter's blessing. The dear, soft, white, and tender arms of his first-born twined round him—her pale weeping face was fixed upon him—and the innocent and loving creature's voice penetrated into the utter darkness of his soul. He kissed her many times, and held her long unto his heart, that it might feel the last close pressure of that bosom which had never cherished one unfilial thought, and which he was now going to leave unprotected amongst all the misery and wickedness of an afflicted and reckless world. And who had cursed him?—His own mother, whom, upon the day his father died, he had taken under just and natural protection. The very words, which she had calmly spoken on that day by the bed-side of her dead husband, now recurred to him with horrible distinctness—words of love and gratitude—and his own truly filial reply. Was he the same man? And how had Satan entered into and corrupted his heart, till all its best and most deeply-rooted feelings were tainted and withered—root, leaf, branch, and stem—and his whole being given over to profligacy and perdition? He glared upon the creature before him—and scarce could believe that it was his sweet daughter Margaret—whom he had loved so entirely—whom he yet loved, not as

before, but distractedly, and with the passion of a lost madman; and first stamping upon the ground, and then softly laying his quivering hand upon her head, he muttered,—

"Go back, go back, Margaret, and I will follow by and by; a friend is to meet me here whom you must not see—Go back, and tell your mother, that I will return to Braehead." Margaret withdrew from his embrace, and, almost incredulous, kept her beseeching eyes fixed upon him; for the lie of his heart dashed his countenance with the sallow hue of falsehood, and he trembled from head to foot. He knew that he was deceiving her in whom there was no deceit—deserting her whom God had given—breaking for ever the bonds which love, virtue, and religion, have made most holy; and all this for the sake of a passion that was almost unmixed misery, and wholly unmixed guilt, for the sake of a being abandoned and excommunicated, whose beauty was a bane, and whose affection had blighted both his and her hopes in this world and the world to come.

Margaret knew not, could not know, all the convulsions in her father's heart. But she knew that he whom she had always honoured, revered, and yet loved with yearning tenderness, was afflicted with a strange sorrow, and abandoned to some incomprehensible sin. She watched his changing countenance—she hung upon the contortions of his frame—and the glitter of his eyes, and the groans that heaved his breast. Again

she rushed into his embrace, and sobbed out the name of her mother, and Esther, and poor Marion—and then implored and beseeched him, by her own love and her own grief, and by all the undeserved kindness and fondness he had always shown her—at meals—at prayer—and in her bed, when he came every night to kiss her,—to return to his house, and to be happy, in spite of all the misery that had ever afflicted him, with her mother and them all who would live and die for him,—for him who had supported them all, and who had ever been and ever would be the best and most loving of all fathers.

There was now a third person in the little glen,—and a voice somewhat hollow, but not without feminine softness, said,—"Walter, Walter, what is this? Is she your child? Order her home."—Margaret left her father's bosom, and saw, in the clear moonlight, the tall stately figure of that beautiful woman. She at first drew herself back as in fear, for the bold bright eyes abashed her, and she also knew, in her inmost heart, that this was the wicked person who had deluded her father, and brought all their misery into Braehead. A holy anger warmed her blood when she beheld the adulteress kiss her father's cheek; and she stept forward unawed, and bold in the purity of nature. "Why do you wile away our father frae us? My mother is his wife, and loves him far better than ever you can do. His mother is lying yonder alone—dead on the bed. He has a blind lassie, and another

that is an innocent; and our mother has long been weak, and not able to work. I say, then, go your ways—for the commandments of God are against you, and He will not spare them who work iniquity."

Margaret Lyndsay had a sweet mild face—eyes of softest hazel—and the very spirit of gentleness breathed over her light auburn hair. But now there came a flash from the offended sanctity of her innocence, that, for a while, struck into that bad woman's heart. "Are you not afraid of the great God, whose eye is now upon us?" And so saying, she looked up to the heavens, where the moon was shining without a cloud, and whose blue serene face was sparkling with many thousand stars. There was deep and wide silence—only the sighs of this innocent child, and the groans of her wicked father. They came faster and faster—louder and louder. Margaret, beginning to hope that he was at last relenting, again folded him in her embraces, and strove gently to draw him towards her, and towards their deserted home. "Go away, woman—and may God bless you! You have not the face of one that is very cruel. We all will bless you—and, poor as we are, you never shall want, while we can work. Our prayers will do something, perhaps, if they are sincere, which they will be; and God will take pity on you and forgive you, if you will not kill us all—for without our father must we indeed all die of grief."

His paramour now began to dread that Walter

Lyndsay might be lost to her, and fiercely grasping Margaret's arm, tore her from his side, and flung her with violence away, till she fell upon the bank. "Did you fix this meeting with your brat to insult the woman you have ruined? Was your throat stuffed with lies when I gave you all those endearments at parting but half an hour ago, and do you send this bosom for food to the worms?" With these words she tore open her bosom—and the infatuated man laid down his head upon it. "Cursed be the hour, Walter, that your head first lay there—for you know that, till then, I was innocent. But go home—go home—and let me be buried—like a pauper and a prostitute—for you have made me both. No—not that—for I am true to you as the worm that never dies is true to an evil conscience." Margaret Lyndsay was sitting on the ground, stunned, and with her hands before her eyes; and, when she dared again to look up, she saw only footsteps that had dashed and trampled the thick dews—her father and his Evil Spirit had disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARGARET continued sitting for a while, all by herself, and utterly disconsolate, in that little moonlight glen. During many a sweet sunny day, of many a long long summer, for heretofore almost all the whole year had been summer to her, had she and her brother, and her sister, and her companions, pursued their harmless plays, among these brooms, hollows, green knolls, and hawthorn thickets. Not unfrequently had her father come, and joined them in the summer evenings, on his late return from his work in the town; and on the very last King's Birth-day, he had helped them to seek out the few yellow branches of the early-blossomed broom for garlands, to welcome that pleasant festival, in the very place where he had now deserted herself, her mother, and them all.

But the calamity that had befallen them was too great to bear long reflection in the mind of a solitary girl in such a solitary place. The thought of her mother's misery went quite through her heart, and Margaret asked herself why she was sitting so long

idly there, when she was so much wanted at their unhappy home. She had left the dead—quiet now, and needing no attendance, for the sake of the living—disturbed, and sorely requiring what in madness he had spurned. She had done her duty, but she knew it not, for it was in a mental agony of passion that she had flown to him, and now it was in the last exhaustion of her heart that she crept back to the house of her widowed mother and her orphan sisters.

She stopt for a moment at the door, to wipe the tears away that had stained her cheeks, and to tie up her long hair that had fallen down when that woman so cruelly dashed her to the ground, and as she was about to lift the latchet, she heard the sound of voices in the house. Her mother had come to the threshhold to look out into the moonlight for her daughter, and she now put her finger to her lips to enjoin silence. Margaret went in, and found several neighbours in the house, whom her mother had brought to look on the body of the old woman, lest any life remained. They were sitting solemnly, but not sadly, and without tears, for tears are seldom shed by the poor over the corpse of threescore and ten. Margaret saw at once that there was death, and she walked into her grandmother's room. How different a sight from that which she had just left! No disturbance here,—no ghastly contortions of countenance,—no blackening frowns,—no miserable eyes; but perfect peace,—features overspread with a serene beauty,—smiles like

the moonlight,—and lids shut as if in a happy dream. The expression of that countenance was far milder now in death than it had ever been in life. All the gentlest and sweetest qualities of her soul, and it had many such, alone seemed to survive there. All that was hard, or stern, or austere, had passed away; there was nothing to mar the passionless beauty of the venerable dead. So Margaret bent forward, and kissed the still Saint-like image; her whole soul was at once quieted within her, and she knelt down in prayer.

Nor did the deserted wife seem less wonderfully supported. She had been sitting by the death-bed of the mother of her husband, when that husband was leaning his head on a harlot's bosom. A few moments before that mother died, Alice had raised her head upon the pillow, and thought she saw sense within her glazed eyes. "Oh! take your curse off your son!" did she keep repeating, over and over again, with a piteous voice. The death-like image heard the meaning; and, "O God of my fathers, forgive and bless my Walter!" were her last indistinct words. Then, indeed, was a weight, hard to be borne, taken off that conjugal heart; and now that the one was dead, and the other worse than dead, yet was she, in the elevation of her unconscious virtue, almost happy, and never more than at that dismal hour humbly thankful to Heaven.

Two of the neighbours wished to remain all night in the house, but their kindness was acknowledged

and declined. There was at present no farther service to be done for the dead—blind Esther and helpless Marion were fast asleep—and both mother and daughter longed to be left to themselves. They accompanied their good neighbours to the door; one of whom, on parting, said, looking up, "Oh! but her soul has departed on a bonny quiet night—a' nature, baith heaven and earth, is at rest!"

When the door was shut for the night, her mother calmly bid Margaret sit down beside her, and asked her to tell what had happened to her during her absence. It had been one of the first lessons instilled into the child's mind never to tell a lie; and she now narrated, as far as she could, all that she had seen and heard. Few questions were put to her—for the broken-hearted wife and widow wished not to hear from such young and innocent lips more than was necessary to let her fully understand the extent of her desolation. Neither did she break out into any exclamations of grief or anger. Had she herself been forced to witness any part of what her daughter had seen, indignation would doubtless have mingled with a bitter sense of wrong and insult, and her blood might have boiled while misery wrung out her tears. But she had long known that there was guilt; and now that it had fallen to the lot of her own daughter to witness and reveal it, it was not fitting to use angry expressions towards a father in hearing of such a

child; and, therefore, while she solemnly condemned the sin, most tenderly did she spare the sinner.

It was right now that she should admit Margaret to her nearest and closest confidence—for on her affectionate and virtuous nature the orphan family was henceforth in a great measure to depend. So she told her more than she had ever done of her own early life—the affecting circumstances of her marriage—her husband's perfect kindness for many years—a kindness which had unceasingly embraced them all, old and young, till bad men had sown irreligious thoughts in his heart, and then he forsook his own cheerful fireside and quiet bed, till, lapse after lapse, known only to his own soul, he at last had fallen away utterly from God, and, lo! the miserable end. Then, indeed, did Alice break forth into lamentation. The green fields about her father's house,—all her simple, innocent, and happy life about that quiet farm, laborious as it had been,—her father's sudden death,—Walter Lyndsay's compassion and love for her an orphan,—his disinterested affection for one who was so poor,—their many blessed years, when every thing within doors, and without, went to their hearts' desire,—all came upon her with a weight not to be borne, and she wondered at the wickedness, the alteration, and the decay.

Margaret sat still, and said nothing; but not a word—not a tone of her mother's voice—not a sigh nor a tear escaped her heart. Hitherto her whole cares

and anxieties (and for one so young she had had not a few) had been for the present hour or day; but now she saw that there was a future belonging to this life, and that she must never more be only a thoughtless, laughing, happy girl, but even sad, if not sorrowful, like her beloved mother. She felt satisfied in her innocent mind that she had already had too too much joy; and when she thought of that dreadful scene in the little glen, and then beheld her mother's resignation taking quiet place of that distracted grief, she drew her stool nearer to her side; and almost in an ecstasy of filial love told her to fear nothing, for that she herself, although young and ignorant, felt strong in the fear of God.

It was now past midnight, and the last sparks of the peat-fire, which one of the neighbours had renewed unasked during the affliction, had quite gone out in the ashes. But the moon and stars had filled the room with so much clear light, that mother and daughter had seen distinctly each other's faces, and knew therein that neither of them was sorely afraid of the future, with all its inevitable ills. "I will sleep with you tonight," said Margaret, with a sudden sob; for she had lain every night, for a month past, on the bed where those other old lifeless limbs were now stretched in their coldness. So she assisted her worn-out mother to her bed, and they lay down together, with their arms across each other's breast. In a few minutes gracious nature gave up the soul of the child to sleep; and

her face, so perfectly free from every touch of sin in the deep beauty of its repose, comforted the aching heart of the widow, as often and often before morning she sat up disturbedly in her bed, and clasped her hands in an agony of pity and despair, for the sake of him who had gone away, never again, most probably, to see her in this life.

CHAPTER IX.

A "FATHERLESS FAMILY" are two melancholy words, and here there were many things to deepen their meaning, even to the most cold-hearted. The Lyndsays had always been in a condition of life somewhat above the common, and had for many years been looked upon as a perfect pattern of domestic virtue, respectability, and happiness, by every one not only in Braehead, but over all the parish. Slight symptoms of internal sorrow and decay had now and then been visible to a few more observant eyes, in the neglected and weedy state of their little garden, formerly the neatest and richest of all, and in the pale faces and downcast eyes of mother and daughter, so unlike their customary expression of gaiety and contentment. Then bad rumours were afloat of a cruel husband, and an improvident father, till guilt was publicly and ineffaceably branded upon his name, and the best man in the village first incarcerated like a felon, had next vanished like a ghost. Then that venerable old woman, who had sat for years in her chair at

her busy wheel, till, palsy-stricken, her foot and hand were numbed into rest, and to turn over the leaves of her Bible was as much as she could do, dropt the body and disappeared. The son, a boy whom every body had liked, was far away, or dead, perhaps given to evil courses. The poor blind lassie was not heard singing so constantly as she used to do; and she seldom finished a single song; now a verse of something plaintive, and immediately after a frolicsome and comic strain, stopt short of a sudden, as if it were frozen within her heart. That other harmless creature alone was unchanged. Sometimes she would ask, with a momentary sadness on her earnest face, for her father and her grandmother; but a word pacified her, and she would scarcely have known the difference, had she been told that the one had gone to bliss in heaven, and that the other was wandering in misery on the earth.

It is a hard and painful thing to inhabit a house, where one has been perfectly happy,—after all that constituted that happiness, or on which it entirely depended, is for ever gone. And it is worst of all, when the change has been wrought, not by death, but by sin. So felt this deserted woman, when she looked up to the sheltering trees, and across the little gardens and glens of Braehead. This had been her Paradise, when hither she came after her marriage. Here had all the children been born, and their voices and their laughter had filled all the air around, each succeeding year,

with more various and intermingled sounds. But now the place was stript of all that made it Braehead, and a new character brought dismally over it, of melancholy, shame, and despair. To live there was impossible; yet the widow looked on her orphans, and wished not for a while to die.

She communicated to Margaret her intention of taking a very low-rented dwelling, in some one of the obscure lanes of the Town, where they might be able, by their united work, to earn a subsistence; and, perhaps, by and by, to open a reading and sewing school for the children of their poor neighbours. Margaret heard the proposal with a cheerful mind. She felt that she had no right to remain at Braehead; and, therefore, she crushed at once all such wishes in her heart. A new destiny awaited her, in which, as long as her mother remained tolerably strong, and she had her own health, there was nothing in the least appalling or repulsive. On the contrary, they would all be living together, unobserved and quite by themselves. "We never hear," she would say, "my dear mother, of any families really dying of want, and many support themselves without parents at all. There is no fear of us; let us have our house in the ugliest darkest lane, if there it will be cheapest; and we shall be as happy, and happier too, than many who live in the grandest streets or squares."

Walter Lyndsay had deserted his family towards the end of August,—time crept on over the floor of the house

of affliction,—and it was now the third week in November. The house which the widow was about to leave had been the property of an old man in comfortable circumstances, who, on hearing of their misfortunes, had instantly agreed to remit their half-year's rent altogether, or to take it when it might be convenient for them to pay the sum. But he died,—and his heir, being a stranger, and in difficulties, the rent of four pounds was rigorously demanded. All the furniture, except one bed, a table, and two or three chairs, had been already sold, week after week;—and to raise the sum of four pounds seemed to be impossible. But a few days before the term-day, a neighbour-woman, who had been married about the same time with Alice, had lived all along at Braehead, and had been familiar in the house, both in happiness and affliction, came in and sat down, with an air of absence and of restraint.—"Hae you ony bad news to tell me?" said the easily alarmed widow;—"if sae, dinna fear to speak. Whatever be the will o' God that I should bear, He will give me strength for the burden. Is my Walter dead?"—"No, no, Alice—I ken naething about the puir man sin' he left Braehead—God bless him; but you are the only widow woman, as ane may say, in the town; and we hae heard about this sair distress o' the rent. We hae a' subscribed—Our husbands, oursels, and some o' the bit bairns too; and here is four pound. May it dae nae guid to him who clawts it out o' the widow's house."

Alice had shed no tears for some weeks past—they had all settled down into her heart. But when she looked at the worthy woman who was herself so poor, and saw the purse in her lap—a sense of that great kindness from those who had so little to spare, smote her, and she wept. The sweet and benign spirit of humanity yet existed for her, the deserted and widowed one; and something that she thought had been withered and dead for ever began to stir within her heart; something like joy in life, and a secret wish for its prolongation. "Yes, Sarah, I will take it;—and well thou knowest, and all my other friends, that 'they who give unto the poor lend unto the Lord.'"

The twenty-fourth day of November came at last—a dim, dull, dreary, and obscure day, fit for parting everlastingly from a place or person tenderly beloved. There was no sun—no wind—no sound in the misty and unechoing air. A deadness lay over the wet earth, and there was no visible Heaven. Their goods and chattels were few; but many little delays occurred, some accidental, and more in the unwillingness of their hearts to take a final farewell. A neighbour had lent his cart for the flitting, and it was now standing loaded at the door, ready to move away. The fire, which had been kindled in the morning with a few borrowed peats, was now out—the shutters closed—the door was locked—and the key put into the hand of the person sent to receive it. And now there was

nothing more to be said or done, and the impatient horse started briskly away from Braehead. The blind girl, and poor Marion, were sitting in the cart—Margaret and her mother were on foot. Esther had two or three small flower-pots in her lap, for in her blindness she loved the sweet fragrance, and the felt forms and imagined beauty of flowers; and the innocent carried away her tame pigeon in her bosom. Just as Margaret lingered on the threshold, the Robin redbreast, that had been their boarder for several winters, hopped upon the stone-seat at the side of the door, and turned up its merry eyes to her face. "There," said she, "is your last crumb from us, sweet Roby, but there is a God who takes care o' us a'." The widow had by this time shut down the lid of her memory, and left all the hoard of her thoughts and feelings, joyful or despairing, buried in darkness. The assembled group of neighbours, mostly mothers with their children in their arms, had given the "God bless you, Alice, God bless you, Margaret, and the lave," and began to disperse; each turning to her own cares and anxieties, in which, before night, the Lyndsays would either be forgotten, or thought on with that unpainful sympathy which is all the poor can afford or expect, but which, as in this case, often yields the fairest fruits of charity and love.

A cold sleety rain accompanied the cart and the foot travellers all the way to the city. Short as the distance was, they met with several other flittings,

some seemingly cheerful, and from good to better,—others with woe-begone faces, going like themselves down the path of poverty, on a journey from which they were to rest at night in a bare and hungry house. And now they drove through the suburbs, and into the city, passing unheeded among crowds of people, all on their own business of pleasure or profit, laughing, jibing, shouting, cursing,—the stir, and tumult, and torrent of congregated life. Margaret could hardly help feeling elated with the glitter of all the shining windows, and the hurry of the streets. "Safe us, what a noisy town is this Edinburgh!" said blind Esther; "and yet hear till that woman singing ballads. Waes me, but she has a sair cracked voice, and rins out o' the tune a' thegither." Marion sat silent with her pigeon warm in her breast below her brown cloak, unknowing she of change of time or of place, and reconciled to sit patiently there, with the soft plumage touching her heart, if the cart had gone on, through the cold and sleet, to midnight.

The cart stopt at the foot of a lane too narrow to admit the wheels, and also too steep for a laden horse. Two or three of their new neighbours,—persons in the very humblest condition, coarsely and negligently dressed, but seemingly kind and decent people, came out from their houses at the stopping of the cart-wheels, and one of them said, "Aye, aye, here's the flitting, I'se warrant, frae Braehead. Is that you, Mrs Lyndsay? Hech, sers, but you've gotten a nasty cauld wet

day for coming into Auld Reekie, as you kintra folks ca' Embro.—Hae ye had ony tidings, say ye, o' your gudeman since he gaed aff wi' that limmer?—dool be wi' her and a' sic like." Alice replied kindly to such questioning, for she knew it was not meant unkindly. The cart was soon unladen, and the furniture put into the empty room. A cheerful fire was blazing, and the animated and interested faces of the honest folks who crowded into it, on a slight acquaintance, unceremoniously and curiously, but without rudeness, gave a cheerful welcome to the new dwelling. "I thocht you wad na be the waur o' a bit fire,—so, though ye gied me nae orders, I raked thegither a wheen shavings, and wi' ane o' Jock's spunks I soon made a bleeze. They're your ain coals, and the lum's a grand drawer in a' win's.—I kent that in Mr Jamieson's time,—for he often used to say that he had na a smoky house, although aiblins he might hae a scolding wife."—"Haud your tongue, you tawpie," cried another of the gossips,—"here's a dram for the carter,—the whisky's unco gude the noo at Tam Spiers's.—Take it aff, man, and Mrs Lyndsay maun pree't herself." In a quarter of an hour the beds were laid down,—the room decently arranged,—one and all of the neighbours said "Gude night,"—and the door was closed upon the Lyndsays in their new dwelling.

They blessed and eat their bread in peace. The Bible was then opened, and Margaret read a chapter. There was frequent and loud noise in the lane, of pass-

ing merriment or anger,—but this little congregation worshipped God in a hymn, Esther's sweet voice leading the sacred melody, and they knelt together in prayer. It has been beautifully said by one whose works are not unknown in the dwellings of the poor,

> Tir'd Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep!
> He, like the world, his ready visit pays
> Where fortune smiles;—the wretched he forsakes:
> Swift on his downy pinions flies from woe,
> And lights on lids unsullied with a tear.

Not so did Sleep this night forsake the wretched. He came like moonlight into the house of the widow and the fatherless, and, under the shadow of his wings, their souls lay in oblivion of all trouble, or perhaps solaced even with delightful dreams.

CHAPTER X.

The weakest and most discontented minds are often very suddenly and wonderfully reconciled to an adverse change of fortune. Affliction seems to find some ore in the dross of the most worthless nature; and they who may have felt poor in prosperity, sometimes discover themselves in adversity to be unexpectedly rich. There are many things to catch at to break our fall even from the high places of life into its very lowest; and when the sufferers recover from the blow that at first may have stunned them, they see many small bounties and blessings lying about within their reach sufficient to sustain both life and happiness.

Margaret Lyndsay and her mother brought with them meek virtues, a lowly wisdom, and a deep spirit of faith, into this their sorely altered condition of life; and a few weeks had not passed over their heads till they not only were perfectly reconciled to their two rooms in this dark and even noisome lane, but happier than they had ever been at Braehead since their desertion. Every thing about, around, and above them was

indeed miserably changed; and the pleasant objects that had formerly contributed so much to their happiness were not only gone from before their eyes, but things dreary or loathsome were in their place. Yet the few flowers they had brought with them, rooted in some of the earth of Braehead, although sickly were still alive; and high up beyond the overhanging roof that darkened the lane was sometimes seen a narrow slip of the bright blue beautiful sky. But all within their house and their hearts was unchanged and unchangeable. Herein lie the great and eternal sources of joy and sorrow, alike to the lofty and to the low; and when at night the little room was made snug, and clean, and comfortable—the fire beeted—the shutters closed—work in hand—with tale or song—and the rain driving, or the snow falling without—blessed in that widow's dwelling was the lot of humble and unrepining virtue,—and had some wandering sage been on a pilgrimage to search out Happiness, he might have found her even there sitting with her sister Sorrow, by the fire-side in that obscurest tenement.

The winter had set suddenly in with extreme and unusual severity, and deep long-lying snow blocked up the lane, till it was dug through, and heaped up against the wall higher than the ground windows. Provisions and fuel were dear; and it was a severe season even for those families who were not the very poorest, and who had enough to do to procure the bare necessaries of life. It was a bad time for attempt-

ing to open the smallest school even with the very lowest childrens' fees; but the attempt had been made, and about a dozen scholars came to the house with their Bibles, seams, and samplers. That number, if their parents could pay the merest trifle a quarter, was sufficient to keep the family of their teacher alive, along with what they could otherwise earn. And there is a pride among the very poorest of the poor to pay such debts; for parents, who think of educating their children at all, are not likely to wish to do so at the expence of their own honesty, and at another's loss.

Before Christmas the Lyndsays were known and respected, not only in their own lane, but throughout several adjacent streets. The parents of the children soon saw that they learned there nothing but what was right and good. When at school, they were kept warm at a fire-side, and out of way of all harm; and even those parents, who were themselves too careless of human duties, or of their duties to their Creator, could not but be pleased to see their children more quiet and decent in their manners, less fractious and disobedient, and disposed during the long winter nights to find amusement in what was instruction, and pleasure in reading over their lessons in that Catechism and that Bible which they themselves perhaps had too much neglected. Even the idle, the base, and the dissolute respected the inmates of the floor of that house, and gradually abstained from offering them any of those insults which thoughtless and unfeeling bruta-

lity so often takes a satisfaction in heaping upon those whom they suppose pure enough to feel, and too helpless to repel them. Much meanness, duplicity, coarseness, and vice were daily before the eyes, and often carried into the hearts of this harmless and industrious family; but the minds even of the young, as long as they feel the happiness and the sanctity of innocence, remain pure amidst pollution—to them contact is not contagion—much is seen and heard which they do not understand; and from the sins that Nature in her greatest purity must know, there is found a preservative in the simple joy of that virtue which is strong in the consciousness of being pleasant in the eyes of God.

The very cares and troubles, and anxieties of her little school, were all of a kind to lead away the thoughts of the widow from her own misfortunes. The teazing ways of the careless and obstinate imps forced her to exert herself, and even called out at times exercises of patience, and occasioned slight irritations of temper that made her wonder with a sigh how she who had suffered such great evils could be affected by trifles like these. By degrees she felt an interest—a pride—even a selfishness in her humble and useful trade; and the very airs of the schoolmistress, so necessary to uphold her authority among these urchins, fortified her heart against the intrusion of formidable recollections. So powerful over misery are the occupations of utility or innocence! Margaret, too, delighted in her little schoolroom. She saw, with deep satisfaction, that it was re-

storing her mother to peace of mind; and as for herself, she, in whose heart love did by nature overflow, soon bestowed it on one and all, even the least winning of her childish pupils. Above all, not an hour in the day was left unoccupied; and thus, after a bustling morning and busy afternoon, came on a joyful evening and a tranquil night.

Occupied as they thus were almost continually, yet they had their leisure for amusement, and for deeper happiness. Occasionally a neighbour from Braehead came dropping in, bringing with her a crowd of recollections, which were now not only easy but delightful to bear. Braehead itself none of them had yet ventured to revisit. Their town-neighbours, too, had sometimes their own fire-side parties; for mirth is not afraid of misery, and joy will laugh before the jaws of poverty opening to devour. Then the Sabbath came, and church-bells were ringing all over the wide city. Too much in such cities are the ordinances of religion apt to be neglected or scorned. But multitudes still feel their power; and if it be true, that, sometimes, "those who scoff remain to pray," how much oftener must those do so likewise who have entered the House of God in mere carelessness, or with some light purpose or design. This poor widow, with her daughter Margaret, blind Esther, and also she who being so stricken could know no sin, went regularly every Sabbath to some church, and sat down, wherever they could find a seat, in passage or in pew, or in window seat; or they

stood humbly at the door, and received into their hearts the weekly restoration of Christianity. Perhaps no one looked at them, nor knew who they were; or haply Margaret's meek beauty, so poorly arrayed, touched some stranger's soul with pleasure during the time of prayer or psalm, or Esther's sweetest voice made some to look towards the dim and retired place from which that blind musician was pouring forth the rich song of praise.

Margaret Lyndsay, too, had some companions about her own age. Her young heart yearned towards happy creatures like herself; and what better was she than those around her, that they might not claim her friendship? Her mother trusted to her own nature to form intimacies, and as yet saw nothing to cause anxiety. Pretty Mary Mitchell was her dearest friend, of respectable parents, and living beneath their own roof; and although she was gay and thoughtless, these surely were no sins in one not seventeen years old; and she could not be gayer than her own Margaret once was, before care and an awful sense of duty saddened her, and slackened the quickness of her lightsome footsteps. Therefore, on a Saturday night, Mary was always a welcome visitor at their fire-side.

While the winter was thus passing away, with its long nights, and a perfect reconcilement had grown in the minds of them all to their new life, Esther became to her mother and sister an object of solemn sympathy and commiseration. She had received from Nature a

thoughtful mind and deep feelings; and left so much alone to her own meditations as she necessarily was, her soul disturbed itself, in the absence of all outward objects, with its own workings. She became sad and sadder every day, and at last appeared plunged in a deep and dark melancholy. The tears were often seen pouring from her white sightless eyes; and she frequently moaned, and even got up and walked in her sleep. She was overheard praying God to forgive her sins,—and hoping, in uttermost agony, that she was not too wicked to be saved.

Her mother and Margaret knew that she had been with them at church several times, when a severe and gloomy preacher had dwelt on some of the most awful mysteries of Christianity; and his denunciations of Divine vengeance on unrepentant sinners, and all who knew not the utter wickedness of their fallen nature, had gone far down into the silence of the blind creature's soul. What could they do to comfort her? In their simplicity they knew not how to deny that the words of that dreadful preacher were true; yet they could not endure to witness the fear of the innocent Esther, who partaking, as she did, of human corruption, had yet never injured one of God's creatures, and could not, as they hoped and believed, have done or thought any thing to deserve his wrath. They now never suffered her to be alone, and tried to occupy her tender heart with former remembrances of Braehead, or with thoughts of others' happiness or misery. But her soul

turned away from all such things,—and, brooding over itself, bewailed its own sinfulness, and trembled at the wrath to come. This was a new and a strange affliction, and one which they knew not how religiously to overcome.

It happened, too, that there came into this lane—the abode of so much poverty, disease, ignorance, and vice—a young and amiable lady, of an opulent and respectable family, who took an interest both in the temporal and spiritual welfare of the poor. She visited the Lyndsays, and inquired into the state of their souls. She was a disciple of that powerful preacher, but one with little knowledge on subjects which it is hard for the wisest to understand. Her attention was naturally directed to the blind girl—an object interesting to a mind in search of wonders or novelties in lowly life; and Miss Ramsay, from a few dark expressions of poor Esther, immediately declared that the child was awaked to the truth. She fed her disease with ill-applied and worse understood passages from Scripture, and darkened the terrors that had been long gathering in her soul. The Bible now was a book of fear, or of love in the shadow of fear—and the child looked at last as if she felt a smile to be a sin. The lady told her never again to sing any of her idle and wicked songs; and Esther repented with bitter tears, through many sleepless or haunted nights, that she had sung airs displeasing to a jealous and dreadful God.

Margaret Lyndsay thought it hard to charge her

little, blind sister with such sins as these; and could not help wondering, that a lady, who could take the trouble of coming from a fine house into such a poor room in a dirty lane, with such beautiful and expensive clothes, should teach such very cruel Christianity. "You do not know, Ma'am, our history, or you would not call Esther a sinner. The old clergyman of this parish—we are in Grey-Friars—did not think her so, when he visited us. He told my mother, that, when he looked on her face, he could not help thinking of our Saviour's words about the little children,—'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"—"We have suffered much sorrow and some hardships," said the mother, "and Esther there, I do not fear to say it before her, helped to support the family with bread by her industry, and with spiritual comfort by her holy resignation to all Heaven's decrees. Remember, Madam, that the child is blind, and He who made her so will not refuse the sacrifice of a lowly and contrite heart like Esther's. She has her faults, perhaps, poor thing—though I know of none; for we are a' sinful, that is true. But saw ye, Ma'am, ever ane in a' your life mair innocent than this blind lassie?"—Miss Ramsay made no reply—but shook her head, that rustled and glittered with a proud show of ribbands—put some tracts into the mother's hand, and went away.

Knowing her own ignorance, and fearful to be less alive to the holiness of God than her blind sister, Margaret ventured to knock one evening at the door of

the clergyman of the parish—and found herself, with a beating heart, in the presence of the reverend old man. She told her tale in meekness and simplicity—and, with a gentle smile, he bid her go her ways. He came soon after to the little school in the lane, and spoke pleasantly and graciously, like a father, to them all. Esther felt the peaceful power of his extreme old age quieting the terrors of her quaking heart. He spoke to her, not as a child of sin, but of faith—encouraged her to believe that God was well pleased with all his children who strove to be dutiful—and reminded them that all Christ's miracles were of mercy and exceeding great love. "Did he not make clay, and put it to the eyes of the blind man, Esther, till they saw the light?—and did he not rebuke those who asked if it were because of his own sin, or that of his parents, that he had been born blind? Fear not, my dear child—it is not on such as thou that the wrath of God will descend. I, an old man of fourscore, have more reason to fear God than thou. Continue to honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long on the earth that the Lord thy God hath given thee. Forget not your prayers—be glad in the Lord—and sleep, my child, on thy bed in peace!"—Esther's soul was quieted. She returned by degrees to her former serenity; and although she was not quite so gay as before, there seemed to be complete composure of heart. Neither her mother nor Margaret allowed her now to sit long by herself; for none can tell

the power of silence and solitude over the blind. Margaret especially kept her sweet voice constantly in hearing of the child, whom now they loved with a deeper compassion of love; and Esther, who marked in her darkness the motives of her sister, had a pleasure in showing her by her smiles that they were understood, and that her kindness had inspired both gratitude and tranquillity.

CHAPTER XI.

The spring had now begun to show itself all round about the city, in the pleasant suburbs, the green squares, and the old courts adorned with their solitary elm-tree, or a few flowery shrubs—for it was about the middle of the variable but pleasant month of April. Little wooden boxes, with their sprouting mignionette, were to be seen at windows which the vernal airs and sunshine frequently visited through the smoke—and the old piles of building looked more cheerfully beneath the brightening azure of the sky. Birds were chirping in the more lonesome places among the congregated dwellings of men; and here and there a few yards of hawthorn hedge, preserved by accident or caprice even along the streets, gave notice to townsfolk of the beautiful spirit now bursting into life over the silent country.

The influence of the sweet season was not wholly lost on the widow and her family pent up in that darksome lane. The anemones and ranunculuses that they had brought from Braehead had put forth a few

dim blossoms; and Esther, who often enjoyed the faint perfume, asked Margaret if they were not almost as beautiful there as they had been in their own garden. The widow's heart, too, seemed to revive—her health was better—and there was a stronger, steadier tone in her speech. Their scholars had rather increased in number—they had almost all behaved well—and the faithful discharge of duty had given a satisfaction to her heart that enabled her to think with less trouble on its own hidden and peculiar afflictions.

Her great anxiety now was about her sweet Margaret. She was now in the full beauty of her girlhood—and, retired as her industrious life was, many eyes must have seen and admired her. No doubts had her mother of her purity and innocence; but dark fears of evil coming no one knows whence will for ever find their way into a maternal heart, as long as there is wickedness upon the earth. She sometimes, in their most solemn hours, warned Margaret of guilt that might lie in wait for her even in holy places; and, at such times, the thought of her own husband would chill her very heart-blood. Margaret listened with confidence in herself, but replied without presumption; and then indeed her mother saw that her daughter's soul was too much filled with filial piety to admit even any strong innocent affection for any human being out of their own family. She saw this, and was satisfied—although often and often the dim vague apprehensions would, in spite of herself, return.

"As for you, Esther, if both I and Margaret were dead, you might get into the Orphan Hospital—and, as none on earth would ever seek to hurt you, you would be taken care of by one after another all your days."—"Blind lassies, mother, seldom live long, they say—and I will add one to the number of them that die young. But I am not afraid now of the next life—at least, not as I used to be—although it is an awful thought. If it had na been for that kind old man, I should hae died distracted with fear of that dreadful world. But what makes you speak o' an Orphan Hospital, mother? No doubt they are blessed places for mony a ane,—but I could na leeve a haill day away frae you and Margaret. Neither o' you, wi' a' your kindness, can ken the heart o' the blind."

"Do you know, mother," said Margaret, "what is become of that Miss Ramsay that used sometimes to call on us, and who was forgetful enough to call our good Esther—a sinner?"—"No, Margaret,—I hope no evil."—"She has given her father,—I was told yesterday by Mary Mitchell,—a sore heart. She has married a wild young man in the army, and gone away to the Indies."—"I hope he will be good to her," said Esther, "for she was a kind lady, or she would never have thought of visiting the poor. But it is nine o'clock, and I maun awa to my bed, for I was obliged to finish my mat, and I am not able to keep up my eyelids."

"I sometimes wonder within myself," said the

widow, "that I have brought my mind to such forgetfulness of my Laurence. It would almost seem as if I had not a mother's heart towards him, but I can think o' nae living creature but his father. I daresay my callant is dead. The yellow-fever, they say, aye kills the bonny fair-haired laddies, and my Laurence was ane. He maun be dead, Margaret, or he would never hae been months and months without writing hame."—"Don't be unhappy, mother,—sailors' letters often miscarry. Ye know Laurence has frequently warned us o' that, and told us not to be afraid when we happened not to hear frae him. When I pray for my brither, I always have an assurance that God is guarding him on the wide sea. What for are you greeting, mother?" and Margaret, unable to prevent her own tears, stirred up their fire on the hearth, and said, "Let us hope the best—I would aye hope the best if I saw you mair cheerful." Her mother soon recovered her composure, and they continued to sit up a little longer, talking of ordinary things, when a quick loud knock, as of a strong hand, struck the door, and in a moment it flew open.

There he stood in his blue sailor's dress, and his face beaming and burning with joy,—their own Laurence. His mother saw him for a moment, and then darkness shut up her eyes and her soul. Margaret, who never had feared but that he would return, rose strongly from her chair, but her knees trembled before she reached his eager arms. The sailor then went

tenderly up to his mother, and kissed her cheek. After a little while her eyes again opened on her boy. "I believed you dead of the yellow-fever, or drowned in some wild adventure.—I had no trust in God; but thou art alive, Laurence, and now that I have seen thy face, could I lie down and die in peace. For thou, Laurence, wilt yet be a father to them all, and sorely may they yet want a father's care."—"I hae been at Braehead, mother, and may God bless my father wherever he may be, and whatever may be his life."—"Aye, Laurence, that is my prayer by day and by night. Whatever else others may say about him, we will all continue to bless him—poor man." Laurence wept like a very child; and, for a little while, it seemed as if this meeting had been one of grief. But it was human nature, in its strongest affections, carrying human happiness on to the very brink of suffering.

Peace was restored at length to all their souls, and time allowed for question and reply. For a moment there was silence, and a soft footstep was heard coming down the stair. The blind girl had heard her brother's voice in her unsound sleep; and slipping on her gown, came with her arms wide open towards the fire. "I thought at first it was but a dream—but here thou art, Laurence.—Oh! brother, —brother, but this is sweet!"

It was yet not late in the night, and the fire was renewed. Esther ran to her bed, and put on all her clothes. The little table was set out, with cheerful

voices and laughter, and covered with a napkin; and the mother said, with a face that could now smile from the heart, "My sailor must have his supper;—never, never, did I hope to see thee break bread again!" Margaret soon put things into order; and saying, laughingly, "I must away for eggs and butter, and be back in a twinkling," she lifted up a little basket, and went out, casting a gleam of bliss upon the brave boy, sitting with one of his hands on his mother's lap held fast between both of hers, and the other laid gently on the head of his blind sister, now as happy as any being on the face of the whole earth.

CHAPTER XII.

As Margaret was closing the door behind her, with a light heart, she observed the dark figure of a man standing under the shadow of an old stair-case, just opposite their room window, the shutters of which she had that evening forgotten to shut. But thinking him merely some idle and curious person, she tripped away down the lane, saying inwardly, "Well, he saw a happy fire-side." In a little, however, she heard quick footsteps following her; and as she was passing, somewhat alarmed, through a solitary court of houses almost all uninhabited, a man's heavy hand grasped her arm, and she stopt, with a short cry of fear. The person beside her seemed to be wrapt up in a great-coat, and a black handkerchief half-concealed his face. Her first thought was of Edwards—the height of the figure seemed the same—and the same that unforgotten grasp that clutched her in the wood. But Edwards had been sent across seas for his crimes—and this could not be that ruffian. The hand on her arm relaxed its hold, and now touched her with

gentleness, while a low broken voice said, with a groan, "Fear not, Margaret,—I will not hurt you.—Surely, you fear not me?" That voice made her heart leap up and then die within her,—for sorely changed as it was, she could not mistake the sound which had given pure and deep joy to her heart for so many years. It was indeed her father who spoke,—and these few words were all that could yet be uttered by the miserable man.

Neither for a while could Margaret speak—she sobbed upon his breast, and kissed his hands that were intensely cold. "Oh! blessed night," she at length exclaimed, "beyond all blessedness,—God has indeed heard and granted all our prayers. O father! all has long been forgiven, and my mother will this night kneel beside her husband in prayer. And think,—oh think,—this very night, too, has Laurence come home!" Walter Lyndsay stood fixed to the spot, and his frame shook as with an ague. By the dim glimmer of one solitary lamp in the court, and the light of the only window that had a candle burning within, Margaret indistinctly saw her father's face. Hollow and bony it now was, and worn away by uttermost misery. No traces were now to be seen of that fierce anger that glared upon her in the little glen on the night he left his home. Fixed despair only was now there; and as she kissed his lean cheek she thought in agony, "My father is an hungered!"

"Margaret, this is a thoroughfare, and people will be passing,—come with your father, for I see thou

lovest him still,—come with me, for a few minutes, to some more lonely place, for I must speak with thee, the best child that ever man had, shamefully and most wickedly left an orphan!" Margaret could hardly find breath to say, that whatever shame or wickedness there had been, it was all over now, and buried like a stone in the deep sea. She had put her soft arm within that of her father; he led her almost in silence out of the streets; and then ascending a few steps up the bank below the Castle-rock, where nothing could interrupt them, they sat down together in the darkness. It grew somewhat less black before a word was said, for many hundred lights were burning high above them in the garrison, the city gleamed through the thick night-smoke, and something like moonshine struggled through the huge clouds that lay dense over the sky.

Her father put his arm round Margaret, and made her lean her head on his breast. It was long since one pure untroubled joy had been his, and as the soft breathing bosom of his innocent child was felt regularly meeting the hurried beatings of his own distracted heart, he knew that in losing her he had lost an enjoyment which cannot be exceeded even within the gates of Heaven.

"I arrived in Edinburgh, Margaret, at the dusk of the evening, and I came just to look, for an hour or two, at the house in which you all live. Providentially the shutters were not closed, and I saw

through the clear room into the fire-side. You were all quite happy,—your mother looked as if she had forgiven me,—and I knelt down on the stones near the window, when no one was in the lane, and asked God if he would hear the thanks of a sinful wretch like me. I started up when a sailor boy,—yes,—my own Laurence came, and went in at that door which I may never enter. I beheld that meeting,—and then I knew that my son had even then returned from sea. God is indeed kind to me a sinner, for my guilt, my crimes, have fallen heavy on no head but my own, and that of the poor partner of my sin,—the good, I see, are still happy."

Margaret listened to the sorrowful words, and the sorrowful voice, and her heart was melted into a profound happiness. For she knew not the meaning of what her father uttered, when he said, that he must never enter into her mother's house. Reconciliation,—forgiveness,—clasping embraces,—silent prayers,—and a blessed burthen of sweet dreaming sleep,—these were the thoughts that now filled all her soul; and she half-wondered why her father held her on his bosom here in the darkness, and on the cold hill-side, when a houseful of happiness was at hand,—all that this life contained of joy gathered together into one small room.

"I had resolved to stand there all the night, Margaret, when you came suddenly out, and then I took courage to go and reveal myself unto you, penitent, or at

least remorseful for all my sins. But, Margaret, into that house I may not—must not go. The time is not yet come,—and it never may,—when I can dare to meet your mother face to face. Think not, Margaret, to say it shall now be otherwise; in a few months, if alive, I will come again, and it is possible that then I may show myself to my wife upon my knees." Margaret was lost in grief and wonder, and knew not how to speak to her father, who continued—" You know my sin, Margaret,—you saw her with me. Poor woman, she has not many weeks to live—but ought I to desert her too, and on her death-bed?"—" No—no—no, father—the dying must not be deserted—but come home—come home—and my mother and I will both accompany you to the place where she is dying, wherever it may be,—and we will forgive and comfort her, and say our prayers for her by her bed-side."—" Oh! is there indeed in Nature such pure goodness as this?—Am I with all my cruel guilt yet remembered and beloved by you both?—Take to your mother, Margaret, the blessings of a woeful, heart-broken, perhaps dying man,—for thyself, who treatest me so tenderly, I know not what to pray. Will you not loathe me, when we part, as something odious and polluted, and wish that you had had a different kind of father?"—" I love you better than all this earth—better than if you had never left us. If you were well, and living at home again, we should all be the happiest family living. O! father, father, come home, or let me first run and

tell my mother what awaits her, and then come you in a few minutes to the door." He made no answer, and then said—"I left the dying woman in care of one even poorer than ourselves, and said to her, that I would return on the second night. I have seen my wife, and you all; and now you must go your ways. As soon as I have buried her whom I led into sin, I will see you again, and then do whatever Alice and you wish me to do for the few months I may have to live." His daughter well knew from his hollow voice, that sounded more hollow in that wild rocky place, that her father would give her a parting kiss in that darkness, and she tried not to gainsay his resolution. "But, oh! father, you are white, and thin, and icy cold,—have you eat any thing to-day? and where, where, will you sleep?"—"I will sleep no where, Margaret; but the night will have an end, and before the morning breaks, I must return whence I came, to the dwelling of sin, shame, despair, and death."

Margaret was seized with terror, that her father would sit there all the night. There was frost in the air, and the stones around them were intensely cold. She implored him to suffer her to let him into the house, when all had gone to bed, and he could come up to the room where she and Esther slept. Nobody would see him, and she would give him food, and sit beside him as he lay down, and send him away, since it must be so, before it was light. The miserable man rose up, and held her for a long long time

to his heart, and then said, "Dutiful hast thou ever been, and ever wilt be,—obey thou thy father in this thing—return to your mother and your brother. Disturb not their happiness this night by my name; but when you think fit, tell your mother that you saw me alive, and that I am not more miserable than all must be who forsake God and forget the nature of their own immortal souls." Margaret, stunned and awed by the solemnity of his voice, did not even kiss her father again, but did as he bade her, in obedience to a power that overruled her will, and left him sitting by himself among the darkness, in that solitary place.

CHAPTER XIII.

On her return, Margaret found them all greatly alarmed by her unaccountable absence,—and it was not in her power to conceal the secret within her own heart for a single night. Indeed, her agitated manner showed that something unusual had happened to her; and, therefore, after a few minutes ineffectual efforts to recover herself, she summoned up courage to tell the whole truth. The joy that had been so loud by that little cheerful fire-side was suddenly hushed down into deep and solemn thought—the young sailor's laugh was silent in a moment, and his arm tenderly supported his mother, as, with a deep sigh, she laid her head upon his bosom. It was a wild strange thing to know that her husband was then, perhaps, within a few hundred yards of them all, yet hidden from them, in the darkness of night, in some obscure and unsearchable place—perhaps cold, hungry, and sleepless, and without shelter. Here they had a warm fire—a frugal meal, and comfortable beds,—while he was lying, perhaps, in his penitence, upon the cold

ground in self-inflicted punishment and debasement. "Oh!" thought Alice, "if his soul would but tell him to come to me this night, he would know how perfect can be a wife's forgiveness—how heavenly sweet to her own soul a wife's love!"—But the night passed on, and her husband came not to her—although, no doubt, the unfortunate man was not far off in his penance,—and, perhaps, at the dead of midnight, ventured up the lane, when all the inhabitants were asleep, and looked upon the little tenement that contained a treasure he had flung away, and which he could only hope to have restored to him in heaven.

After a few days past in constant consideration on her husband's affecting behaviour, Alice began to take comfort, and to allow herself to be persuaded that she ought now to be much more happy. That Walter had come a long journey from some unknown place, just to be assured that she and his children were well, and to see them with his own eyes, was a thought that sank with deep joy into the dejected heart of one who had been so cruelly forsaken. Not a word, even of rumour, had she heard about him for many many months, and she had believed that she was utterly forgotten by him, or an object of dislike and aversion. But now she knew that she and her children were still dearer to him than any thing else in this world; and although in her humble and humbled heart she attributed his visit more to his love for them than for herself, yet she did not such injustice either to her own nature or to

his as to think that she had no share in his disturbed affection. Something pure and unselfish, yet not unallied to pride, touched her heart as she felt herself restored, in thought, to her husband's bosom. Her own had been ever warm and faithful; and there had been a time when it sufficed to bless Walter Lyndsay as he laid down his head upon its innocent beauty. Time and sorrow had changed both her heart, and the bosom where it beat; but wasted as her frame now was, and seeming to bear the burthen of more years than had yet been hers, she felt that were God to send back her husband, her soul would meet him in all the love of its younger and brighter days, and that her lips would kiss away for ever, and without reproach, the stains that an erring life had left on that manly breast. There were now times in which she almost persuaded herself that she was no longer a widow.

Every thing that Margaret told her of that interview seemed to prove a fixed determination in her husband's mind to return to his family, on the death of her for whose sake he had forsaken it. And when Alice tried to imagine all the miseries he must have gone through—all the remorse—and then his affection for herself and children that had survived them all, she not only forgave him his sins, but wept for him tears of an unmingled tenderness and pity, the same as if he had sustained some great misfortune in his own house, and had never deserted her bed. She even tried to frame excuses for him, in his own imprudence, in the ruin-

ous conversation of unprincipled men, and in other artifices to her unknown, but that might have assailed him by degrees, till at last he was entangled in a net from which he could not break. Even her own deficiencies and defects were brought meekly up by this Christian to soften her husband's sin; and she tried to believe that if she had been more cheerful, more lively, more inclined to propose occasional relaxation and indulgence in innocent pleasures and recreations to her husband, that his affections might perhaps never have been alienated, and that they might still have been all happy together at Braehead.

Such were the conversations that her mother sometimes had with Margaret; and a happy thing it was, indeed, to that young and loving heart to hear her father spoken of by one she revered as almost perfect in such gentle terms of forgiveness. In the kindling joy of filial affection all thoughts of the guilt and the sin were consumed; and no image was before her but that of a long absent father returned at last. When she did think of his guilt, it was with awe and grief; but rather for herself, and all human beings in general, than for her unfortunate father. If he had so sinned—he who was so kind—so good—how could she hope to escape guilt? She remembered all his instructions—all his prayers long ago—how she had often seen him even weep when her mother, or herself, or her sisters, were ill—how he had often sent away the beggar from his door blessing him and his fire-side.

Since such a father has, indeed, erred, what may become of us his children? Therefore Margaret Lyndsay lent her sweet voice to cheer her mother by tenderest expressions respecting him who was away, and in that communion of simple, humble, and forgiving Christian hearts, he was thought of less as a sinner than as a penitent.

Nor did the mother receive less solace and support from her son—her brave and affectionate sailor boy. All this misery had happened since he had gone to sea. Something of it he had known before his return; but the full light had not been let in upon him till the night of his father's visit. He had himself given his mother a sore heart when he became a sailor; and now he had an opportunity, however short the time might be, to assist in healing a far deeper wound. Though little more than sixteen years of age, he had seen and suffered great hardships on board ship on the West India station; and although nothing could tame the ardour of his strong, fearless, happy spirit,—yet the roaring of the elements, and the frequent spectacles of ghastliest death had given a thoughtful cast to the lad's character, and made him very gentle and compassionate. A single year of danger and hardship had made his soul grow largely,—and when his mother spoke to him about his father, she was made happier than she had thought she ever could be, by his grave, sensible, and most affectionate participation in all her fears and hopes. She now looked upon her Laurence no more as a wild

reckless creature, for whom she would have alternately to weep tears of blame or grief, but as a dutiful son, firm and thoughtful even beyond his years, and likely, if his life was prolonged, to be a blessing to them all, and also, when she looked at him with a mother's eyes,—her own darling pride.

It seemed now as if the sunshine came more brightly and more frequently into the lane—people's faces did not look so sallow and cheerless—the noises about the house were not so harsh and grating—and they felt that the darkest nook in the heart of a town could be a pleasant place. Laurence had leave to come ashore very often, his Lieutenant befriending him; and every day his weather-beaten sun-burnt face, that glistened at the same time with the joyful beauty of boyhood, sent new strength into his mother's heart. He whistled and sang like a very bird all day long whenever he saw they were all disposed to be happy. The veteran alone has a right, and a strong one, to be desponding; but the young sailor, feeling his life afloat and drifting over the sea, rejoices when his feet touch again the stedfast earth, and gathers from every short and uncertain visit to the house of his father or his mother, new thoughts and feelings to feed and live upon, when again the midnight winds shall be piping in the shrouds, and his ship going in darkness along her foaming paths on the great deep.

The free and joyful demeanour of the young sailor pleased all their neighbours in the lane. Something of

that enthusiasm with which most minds think of the British navy was found even here; and he never made his appearance without kind and cordial greetings from many a door and window. It was well seen that he was a dutiful son, and the power of that most human and needful of all virtues, filial piety, is never lost, even on the most careless or most callous. It goes, with its appeal, to every human feeling, at once to the gate of the heart, and nothing obstructs its entrance. The satisfaction the neighbours felt in seeing the young sailor, spread itself over all the family; and some of them who had not been accustomed to speak with the Lyndsays now congratulated them with homely warmth on the boy's return, and prayed that God would save life and limb from battle or shipwreck, for sake of his mother, who was a widow, and worse than a widow. Thus was peace restored to the soul of Alice Lyndsay—and she could now sit by her fire-side at night, with her children, laughing, talking, working, singing round her, and almost partake in the circling merriment;—while on Sabbath, as they sat beside her in the House of God, her heart was filled with a tranquil gratitude, and had a humble hope, that one great blessing more might yet be granted to their united prayers.

It was in such a tranquil state of resignation, that on the afternoon of a Sabbath-day, about the middle of April, Margaret ventured to propose to her mother, that they should all take a walk together as far as Braehead. The sound of that word was a pang to her

heart; but she looked upon Margaret's face, and she saw nothing but a sweet and cheerful smile. "Why not go, mother, we are all together now, and before very long may be even more together still. Laurence, ask my mother to go—for she can refuse you nothing—and does not care about me, now that you have come home!" The two together soon prevailed. Esther's blind face sparkled with joy—and Marion, whose remembrances, dim and confused as they were, yet came upon her at the sound of the word Braehead, which had for so long been one of the most familiar in her small vocabulary, looked upon them with an expression of fleeting intelligence as they were preparing to set off, and said,—"Braehead is the place for birds and butterflies, and the singing honey-bees. Is Robin-red-breast dead and buried? We'll soon see;" and then she ran to her tame dove, and taking it up, began to fondle it, and entirely forgot that any other notion had been in her mind, or that she was to be taken with the rest to Braehead.

It was a pleasant afternoon, and thousands of peaceable parties, mostly family ones, were taking their weekly walk in quiet and contented happiness. Each group was satisfied within itself, and greetings were interchanged, as they passed along, in that kind spirit which had been infused into their minds by the service of the hallowed day. There was no noise, and one character of grateful contentment reigned over all. The large city was hushed within, without, and around,

Every irregular and disturbing feeling seemed almost wholly calmed; and the gentle closing of day, without being dull or spiritless, was such as the minds of men would have desired, who were obliged by necessity to forget in their usual occupations more serious and solemn thought, and who therefore enjoyed the stated return of leisure and freedom from a painful thraldom, much more in the sobriety of reflection, than they would have done in eager and unrestrained delight. The young sailor, who had not forgotten his Scottish Sabbaths in foreign countries, but who had kept them with a happy conscience amidst the tumult and recklessness of a ship of war, now walked through places well-known and well-beloved, with a heart alive to every minute remembrance. He had some pleasant or gay thought to connect with every field, and with many of the knotted trunks of the old way-side trees. At first his recollections, as he gladly expressed them, were mournful to his mother's heart; but when she reflected how happy were all her children, and that her husband would probably return to her, that despondency gradually wore off, and before they came in sight of the Plane trees of Braehead, faintly tinged with the verdure of spring, she felt quite happy, and joined with her children in a joyful exclamation, as soon as they beheld the roof of what had so long been their own house. Its appearance gave no painful shock,—there it stood in its well-known vernal beauty, and Margaret's eyes flashed through joyful

tears as she turned smiling round to her mother, and said, "Bonny Braehead looks as sweet as ever,—it is not true that they have cut down our trees."

The small party did not go straight up to the house, but, by a footpath, went into the wide broomy field behind it, and sat down together on a green knoll. Little or nothing was changed. They knew the very cows that were pasturing about them, and the tall grey horse belonging to John Walker, their old neighbour, was taking his Sabbath rest in the pasture. A few early lambs were running to and fro,—the voice of bees was not unheard,—and the loud, clear, and mellow song of the blackbirds was ringing through the Braidhill Wood. It was just a Sabbath of other years. One person only was wanting. Had he been with them, their happiness had been complete. But although he was not there, his image was; and there were circumstances known to one and all of them, that gave them reason to hope that, on their next visit, he might be present at the head of them all, and dearer to them for the sake of his misfortunes and his repented sins. So the small party continued sitting in tranquillity,—not indeed a party of pleasure, for that is but a shallow word, but one contented with their lot, and humbly anxious to deserve it, with all its sorrows, by resignation to the decrees of Heaven.

Laurence started up, and taking Margaret by the arm, cheerfully said, "Let us visit honest John Walker." His mother, Esther, and Marion followed, and

by well known ways they soon were at the door of their rude, but kind-hearted neighbour. All the family were at home; and after the first friendly meeting, all eyes were rivetted on the young sailor. Young and old devoured the words of him who had sailed over the wide seas, and seen far off countries. The good woman of the house soon got tea ready, and the spirits of all rising in the unexpected pleasure of the visit, an hour or two passed away as cheerfully as ever they had done in former times, when the Lyndsays were themselves inhabitants of Braehead. No heart was suffered to flag, or to give itself up to painful recollections. A homely happiness bound them all down within the limits of that room, and while Laurence told tales of foreign parts, and spoke of his ship, her guns, and her crew, his own mother listened with pride and admiration, and had not a single thought of her own calamities. Margaret sat eyeing her brother with a sparkling countenance; and blind Esther, whose own steps were so limited, followed in a dream the course of the ship in which Laurence had sailed so many thousand leagues, and formed her own incommunicable ideas of the countries he described, and their strange inhabitants. Poor Marion, forgetting, as it seemed, her present life, in the vivid remembrance of other days, recognized pieces of the furniture formerly familiar to her, went up to the large wicker cage, and spoke to the thrush by his name, and then patted the head of the large good natured

mastiff, whom she knew to be an old acquaintance. "Let us return thanks," said John Walker,—and every one was silent as he repeated the prayer and thanksgiving.

"Let me now discharge my debt," said Alice with a cheerful countenance. "You raised four pounds for us among the neighbours, when it was sorely needed. There it is,—and my sailor gave his share—God bless him!—nor was Esther wanting." A calm satisfaction of the conscience was in the widow's heart when Mrs Walker took the money—and said, that a' the neighbours would think there had been a blessing in it,—for that the Lyndsays were no longer poor.

But they could not leave Braehead without visiting, if they durst, what had so long been their own dwelling. They understood that decent and good people now inhabited that house. Without any disturbed emotion, they opened the little gate, and heard the sound of the gravel beneath their feet, as they walked together past the front. The windows were as clear and bright as before, and the creeping shrubs which had grown up under their own eyes, and had been tied by their own hands, had not been neglected. All was neat, orderly, and beautiful. A similar spirit of domestic happiness now seemed to prevail over the dwelling. As soon as it was known who they were, chairs were kindly set for them all, and a young decently-clad couple welcomed them as visitors to the house in which they

had so long lived. Their hearts were fortified by pure resigned religious contentment, and not a tear was shed. Alice was grave and sedate,—but Laurence and Margaret, overjoyed at seeing their mother so happy, smiled at each other, and alluded to former times. They did not repine,—they felt no envy towards the present worthy inhabitants. They had had their own long days and years at Braehead,—and now Margaret was satisfied to live in that dark and gloomy lane, and Laurence to be a wanderer on the seas.

They all felt that God had been gracious to them, and that as long as they obeyed his laws, happiness would find them out wherever their lot was cast. It was the Sabbath-day—the day of contentment and peace;—they had been happy for a few hours more at Braehead;—and now that the day-light was nearly gone, and the sun sinking, as they had all often seen him sink, behind the distant Highland mountains;—they said good-night without any painful sighs,—and, walking quietly back to the town through the pleasant dimness of the dewy evening, they entered the door of their own dwelling in the lane,—and after short and fervent prayers, all lay down in peace.

CHAPTER XIV.

LAURENCE sometimes brought to his mother's house a young messmate, named Henry Needham, who had been his bosom-friend from the first month they were together at sea. He was an English boy, the son of a poor curate, with a large family, and had left home clandestinely, like Laurence himself, for the life of a sailor. He was nearly two years older than the Scotch boy, and had been of great use to him in all his duties on board ship. In Kingston harbour Laurence had had the yellow-fever, and Harry Needham had been his nurse. The lads, therefore, were indeed real friends—brothers; and no wonder that Harry was at all times welcome in the widow's house. Alice, in a few days, absolutely loved him as her own son. Margaret showed him, by her sweet smiles and gentle voice, how happy she always was to see him who had saved her brother's life; and blind Esther, charmed by the sound of his southern speech, and by the heartsome laughter that ever accompanied the gay talk of the witty "English laddie," was always more cheerful when he was in

the room. Both boys had ceased to indulge in any delusive dreams of a sea-life, and had experienced many of its hard and stern realities. But they had chosen it, were now bound to it by honour, pride, spirit, fortitude, and many other feelings that are not easily tamed or extinguished; and although the ignorant enthusiasm of young imagination had now less power in their minds, yet they were proud of their profession, and showed by their bold, free, and unclouded eyes, that they were contented to face danger on that element, and glad when it could be so, to enjoy on shore the happiness of calm human affections.

Laurence's mother had, for a long time, been so much a prey to severe affliction, that her heart had often ceased to follow him over the seas, and had almost been brought to a sort of dull and sad conviction that her boy would never return. His sudden and unexpected reappearance completely thawed the frost in her heart,—and that heart was now filled with the warm overflowings of maternal love and pride. Laurence was much grown; and while any one might have thought him a handsome boy, to her he seemed perfectly beautiful. Her naturally calm and sedate spirit, rendered more so by no ordinary sufferings, was not proof against such deep delight as now came upon it; her face was now often overspread with smiling happiness; her motions more lively and active as in former pleasant days; and all the neighbours said, that Mrs Lyndsay was quite a new woman since the re-

turn of her boy. Laurence, too, looked forward on life in hope and confidence; and told his mother, that, if he was spared, he might not always be serving before the mast; for that his Captain, finding he had education, had promised, if possible, to get him, some day or other, made a midshipman. The widow's heart was full of gratitude to Heaven when she listened to her son's cheerful voice, and partook insensibly in some measure of those eager and ardent hopes which buoyed up and gladdened the lad's fearless spirit. The sea sounded less mournfully and terribly in her dreams, and she was even able to smile and half believe, when Laurence laughingly told her that sea was the place for long life, and that people almost all died on their lazy beds on shore. "I will not be so low-spirited about you again, when you are away, Laurence," said his mother; but she knew not her own heart at the time she spoke, for her fears were to be in proportion to her love, and that was now, indeed, exceeding great.

"To-morrow is May-day," said the young sailor to his mother, "and I am set upon a ploy. I must have my face washed in May dew on the top of Arthur's Seat. It will keep it from being sun-burnt. Bonny Mary Mitchell shall be my sweetheart for the time, and Margaret, there, may be Harry Needham's. Esther will take hold of my other arm, and we will all come back, perfect beauties, in time to breakfast. We must start by sunrise, or the diamonds and pearls will all

be gathered up from the grass, by the hands of idle thieves like ourselves, who go to cheat the fairies." Harry joined his eloquence to that of his friend, and Alice, happy to see them all happy, agreed to the proposal.

Before four o'clock on May morning, the party left the dark narrow lane, wherein all seasons of the year were so much alike, and walked arm in arm together beneath the soft, sweet, still dawning that was colouring the heavens above with the beauty of its rosy light. The city was yet hushed in sleep, and the huge masses of buildings smokeless, glimmering, and silent. Here and there the footfall of an early riser was heard, perhaps going to awaken or collect a party, for the same pleasant pastime. The turrets of Holyrood were sounding in the twilight with the coo of pigeons, as the little party past by the old Palace; and it seemed to be getting visibly lighter every moment, till they reached the stone-seat at St Anthony's Well.

Their hearts were happy, and as they sat talking and laughing, all the scene before, around, and above them, became apparent

"Under the opening eyelids of the morn."

The heaven sent its still bright joy into their young and open souls—the freshness of the dewy green-sward glittered on all sides—the clear pure radiance of the little undisturbed fountain, by which they sat in its

rocky cell, was pleasant to them so early afoot—the small birds began to twitter among the mosses of the ruined Chapel—and "There she lies," exclaimed Laurence, gazing on the now apparent Frith, and pointing to their own frigate,—"there she lies, Harry,—the lazy lubbers will be about mounting the morning watch." Harry pointed out to Margaret, at his side, his Majesty's frigate the Tribune; and said, pressing her arm closer to his heart, "After this, I shall never drink my grog, without saying or thinking, 'Health to sweet Margaret Lyndsay.'"

It was now perfect day-light, and the joyous party ascended the hill. "What right, by the bye," said Harry Needham, "have you folks in Scotland to call your mountains by the name of our English kings? King Arthur, indeed! He never sat up yonder in his days. And then you have your round-table, too, at John o' Groat's House. If my father was here,—he is a devil of an antiquarian,—he would tell you all about it, and send that old Scotch fir round-table spinning into the North Sea."—"When we come to any o' the fairy rings," whispered Blind Esther, "I wish you would stop and tell me, for I would just like to sit down in the middle o' ane, and try a charm." "No stopping, ladies and gentlemen," said Laurence, "till we get to the topmost top of the Seat, and then I will take breath, and a kiss and a half from Mary, which she promised me last Wednesday. I think I see Jack Swinton looking at us with his glass from the

frigate. But we have the best of the joke." Youth and joy carried them swiftly up the hill, and they welcomed in May-day, as it was right they should, in spite of all the telescopes of the Tribune.

"Could you show us such a sight as this in England, Harry?—If King Arthur never sat here, as you and your dad say, so much the greater pity for him. —There's a Castle for you, that you Englishers never could take since it stood on that rock—and there is a City worth looking at, nane o' your low-built straggling streets, but houses o' fourteen stories, and filled from keel to deck with, perhaps, a jolly crew of five hundred men, women, children, and auld wives.—There's a corn country for you—and yonder's the Highlands, that will send down, in harvest-time, a shower of shearers. England!—Will you ever compare England again, Harry, with such a country as Scotland? Look at it, I tell you. Let Margaret wash her ain face in the dew, and look down, you lubber, on the Lothians." Harry was in too happy a humour to deny Scotland's pre-eminence over all the lands of the earth—and as Margaret Lyndsay wiped the May-dew from her smiling face, and with an innocent blush half-hid it from him below her bonnet, he would have willingly allowed Scotland, even if it had been nothing but a sterile waste of sand, stones, and rocks, to be the Garden of Eden, and the very heart of Paradise.

Hundreds of other parties were now sprinkled over all sides of Arthur's Seat. The townsfolk met on the

summit with people from the country, who had ascended from the direction of Duddingstone, and other villages to the south. One spirit of hilarity prevailed over them all—and the gay, glad, green hill sent up the voice of its rejoicing into the air which was now brightened by the strong sun, and animated with the multitudinous currents of insect life, that seemed to come flowing interminably on from the unknown places of their generation, and passing away with their burnished or sober-suited wings into the appointed silence of their transient and happy existence. The city bells chimed "six"—and the fair beaming May-morn was now in all her beauty, glory, and magnificence, over earth sea and heaven.

This little party, quite wild with joy, came dancing down the hill—but one of them always was with the blind girl. She seemed to enjoy the May-day morn as much as any of them—and almost every minute had been adding to her bunch of primroses, which the others had gathered. The loss of eyes was no loss to her—her happiness was complete. And when again they rested, after their descent, on the stone-seat by St Anthony's Well, unasked she sang them one of her favourite songs. In the midst of such happiness as theirs, it is not to be wondered at that she chose a plaintive air—and never had her voice sounded so silver-sweet as among the echoes of that silent place. Two or three other small parties, arrested, as they were passing by, listened with delight

to the unexpected music—"Puir thing, I'm thinking she's blind."—"It's that makes her sing sae sweet." —"God send you a long life and a happy ane, my bonny bairn,"—and with these and similar words the strangers past on their own way.

Then there was talk of foreign countries—of islands overshadowing the sea with their beautiful trees—of the canoes of savage men—of battles—shipwrecks—calms—storms—midnight watches on the mast-top—merry meetings below decks—the dull imprisonment at sea—and the exulting liberation on shore. The girls drank in every word with greedy ears; and Esther forgot the fairies and their rings, in thoughts dim and delightful, stretching away, in her dark imagination, over the uttermost parts of the earth.

Alice and poor Marion had not been up above half-an-hour, the room had just been made clean and tidy, and the breakfast table covered with a white napkin, when the laughing May-dew gatherers were heard in the lane. Laurence brought in Mary Mitchell and Esther; and happy Harry Needham, a few paces behind, attended Margaret, beautiful from the breath of the clear mountain air, innocent and happy, and forgetful of every thing but the present hour, which to her bounded this life, and left it undarkened and undisturbed by memory of the past, or fear of the future.

CHAPTER XV.

THAT beautiful May-day morning had sent mirth and joy through many a narrow lane and gloomy court among the multitude of huddled houses from the Castle-hill to Holyrood. Many dwell in those dark and hidden places, the years of whose childhood have been passed on the clover lea or the heathery moor. They have not lost their liking to the pleasant cottages and farms of the country, nor altogether forgotten the sound of the stream, along whose banks they walked to the parish school, and in play-hours bathed in its pools and linns. A thicker atmosphere is now over them than that which they breathed of old; and they are in all respects townsfolk, and contented with their lot in the midst of noise and obscurity. But if there be an occasional festival in which they may recur to the images of their former life, there are many who will not choose to forget or neglect it. The artisan or mechanic leaves his dim workshop for an hour or a day, and feels that he has yet a heart not insensible to those pleasures which have long ceased to

make a part of his life's enjoyment. Gathering May-dew on a green hill-side, and dancing in a fairy-ring at sunrise, are pastimes little suited to poor hard-working people, cribbed and confined in noisome alleys, and shut out almost the whole year through from the very light of heaven. But the love of nature lies more or less in every human heart;—in many hearts such as these it is strong and indestructible; and on May-day morning Arthur's Seat and the other high grounds, (thirty years ago at least,) used to be covered with groupes of persons in the very lowest situation of life, whose hearts and whose imaginations, town-bred as they were, rejoiced once more in the fresh dews and pure airs of the country, remembering, as they did, the beautiful green pastoral hills of Tweddale, or the misty glens of Badenoch and Lochaber.

Mrs Lyndsay's scholars had May-day to themselves —and some of them brought to school next morning flowers scarcely yet faded, and small twigs of the green hawthorn. That play-day had given spirits both to teachers and scholars. There was even more than the usual cheerful hum in the room, and Margaret had never before felt her task to be so pleasant. Her heart was happier than it knew; and were her father to come home, (which she felt assured he would do soon,) then that room in the lane, which had at first seemed so wretched a place only a few months

ago, would be just as pleasant and happy as the one at Braehead.

In this cheerful state of mind Margaret had one afternoon gone to take a walk with Mary Mitchell. Mary was the first girl about her own age whom Margaret had formed acquaintance with, since she had ceased to be a child; and rather from that circumstance than any similarity of disposition, she felt for her a very sincere friendship. She was a good-humoured, good-looking girl; and Margaret, who had scarcely any other companions of her own years, was always happy in her company. They met, accidentally, with Harry Needham, and he proposed going to the Theatre. At this proposal Mary's face kindled; but Margaret knew that her mother never went there, and she also knew that her grandmother had always spoken of the play-house as a den of wickedness. She therefore at once refused to go. But the gay young sailor laughed at all her scruples, and offered, if she would go, to take all the blame upon himself, and to convince her mother of the harmlessness of the amusement. Margaret felt her imagination roused by the words "Tragedy of Douglas"—she said within herself, that it was hard not to see for once in her life what so many had seen; and having read the play, which has been often printed as a cheap pamphlet, she knew there was nothing bad in it—so, being by nature somewhat mutable in her lighter resolutions, she was prevailed upon to enter the door.

The house was a full one; and before the curtain drew up, Margaret thought herself in a splendid dream. The lights—the music—the ladies in the boxes—the whole spirit of the place—so totally at variance with the small quiet room she had just left—all held her in a delighted delusion; and she scarcely thought herself in this world. At last the stage was revealed—and that solemn Soliloquy was spoken by one whose every word sounded straight to the heart—Mrs Siddons. As the tragedy went on, Margaret gave her tears and sobs freely—and would not, even for her mother's anger, have torn herself away from Lady Randolph and her late-found son. At last the curtain fell upon the dead Norval and his mother wailing over "my beautiful—my brave;" and Margaret, whose hand had long been held, without her being sensible of it, by the young sailor, started up, with her face drenched in tears, and many sobs struggling in her bosom, and as if awakened out of a trance, insisted on going home.

Harry Needham parted from them near the lane, at Margaret's request—and now she trembled as she opened the door, for she knew that she had done what would give her mother much concern and displeasure. Mary Mitchell was with her; and, immediately on sitting down, said that Margaret had been drinking tea with her, in the absence of her parents, who had gone to visit a neighbour. Margaret, thus relieved from the painful necessity of confessing her fault to

her mother, seemed, by her silence, not to contradict this falsehood—and in a short time her confusion went away.

Then Margaret Lyndsay felt that she had been guilty of joining in a lie to her mother, to conceal conduct which she knew would be displeasing and distressing to her, and therefore forbidden. She was ashamed to look up, and wished that there was no light in the room. But how could she confess her fault now, and make poor Mary Mitchell a liar? That good-humoured girl was not afraid about herself, for her parents did not care about such things, but had broken the truth to save a friend. Partly, therefore, from shame, partly fear, and partly from feeling to her companion, Margaret said nothing, and they all went to bed. The simple creature hardly dared to say her prayers. Her sin had not been very great; but, in the night time, it seemed to her to be most wicked, and she often thought of rising up, and going to her mother's bed-side, to confess it all. But the innocent creature fell asleep, and in the morning light she felt relief, and began to consider her offence as less heinous. She determined, however, to confess her fault to her mother before another evening's prayer.

The scholars came in, and Alice was just going to ask some question in the Catechism, when one of the girls said,—"Oh! I wish you had taken me to the playhouse with you last night. My brother said he saw you there with Harry Needham, the English sailor. "Margaret wished herself dead. Had she been con-

victed of a deadly sin, more sinking and suffocating sickness could not have oppressed her heart. Alice looked at her with astonishment and grief; but other feelings touched her, when her poor daughter rose up sobbing, pale, and weeping, and with difficulty walked into the other room. "It is quite true, mother. I did what I well knew was forbidden, and I told a lie to conceal it. I knew not that I had been so wicked. Oh! mother, that yesterday afternoon was to live over again! then might I be happy."

Mrs Lyndsay was soon told the real extent of her daughter's error; and when she looked at her covering her face with her hands, as if in the shame of sin, her heart was deeply affected with the sight of so much simplicity and innocence. Few amusements, indeed, had her sweet beautiful Margaret—and if she had slightly disobeyed, it was in the joy of her heart, and under a temptation that had kindled affections natural and harmless. "Oh! may she remain always as simple, as pure, and as fearful of offence, as she now is," prayed her happy mother. She saw how the poor girl had been led to allow a falsehood, and had then not enough of courage, and too much kindness to confess it, to the discredit of one who had wished to shield her; and, therefore, all day her manner towards Margaret was as tender and affectionate as she could make it, and never before had she uttered her name perhaps with such extreme tenderness, as she did that night in her prayers.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARGARET LYNDSAY'S naturally buoyant and gay disposition now coloured all life to her eyes with the brightness of hope. She had no doubt that her father would return during the summer,—that her mother would soon be as happy as ever,—and that her brother would go and come back from sea safe and unhurt among a thousand dangers. Her mother sometimes could not but be sad to see her so happy,—and perhaps a suspicion,—not painful but uneasy,—was in her maternal heart, that Margaret's excessive gladness was in a great measure owing unknown to herself, to young Harry Needham. The two boys served together, otherwise she would have prayed, much as she was pleased with his frankness, simplicity, and warmth of heart, that the ship would sail and carry the young Englishman for ever away from her house. She feared that if he staid much longer Margaret would not easily forget him, and that a secret sadness might long remain in that pure and innocent heart, now overflowing with happiness. Laurence never, by any acci-

dent, came to see them, but Harry Needham was along with him, and, although Harry sometimes pretended that he had come up to see Mary Mitchell, she discerned clearly that he cared for nothing but the sweet smiles of her own Margaret.

The young sailor was, indeed, very much in love. Never before had he seen such a girl as Margaret Lyndsay. Her sense, her simplicity, her gaiety, all made to him more delightful by her Scottish voice, dialect, and manner, quite won his whole heart. As to marrying, that thought never once entered the mind of a boy of eighteen, who had run away from his parents, neither did so much as the shadow of one wicked thought pass across the heart of that brave young sailor. He had sisters of his own about Margaret's age, and he loved her as tenderly as he loved them, but with a passionate and engrossing restlessness, when she was out of his sight, all unlike calm fraternal affection. He never thought of the future, or, if he did, it was of his ship coming again to Leith, or of himself and Laurence walking down to Edinburgh from some English sea-port on leave of absence. In the present he lived,—and whenever he could leave the vessel, that moment he turned his back upon the shore, and walked with a quick undeviating step to that lane where he was always sure to get a glimpse, at least,—a smile,—a word,—a touch of the hand from sweet,—beautiful Margaret Lyndsay.

The time was now drawing near for the frigate to

sail, and Harry said that every morning he expected to see her "hoist the Blue Peter,"—for it was rumoured that the French Republican fleet were going to put to sea, and that Lord Howe was to be reinforced. A great battle, he said, was expected. At these words Margaret laid down her work and grew deadly pale. "Be not afraid for your brother, my dear lassie, I'll insure his life for one single kiss," and, for the last time, the young sailor kissed her lips. Margaret looked round to see if her mother was in the room, but as she was not, she took up her work,—said nothing,—and in a few moments laughed and talked as before. This was on a Saturday evening, and he made her promise to go with him next morning to church. "I will meet you at the head of Leith Walk, and we will go to the English Chapel, as they call it, at Leith. You never were in one, I dare say, and I wish you to see our religion."

Margaret said that she was afraid she might not be allowed to go—but he told her mother that Laurence was to be of the party, and that they would all three return together after service. Margaret thought she saw something in the expression of Harry's face, that looked as if he were deceiving her mother about Laurence; and she almost wished that it might be so—a slight silent deceit in a young heart yielding to the first delight of an unconscious and innocent passion—but a deceit, small as it was, that was soon to be wept over in rueful tears.

On Sunday morning Margaret dressed herself with all her care—and her mother could not help sighing as she saw the happy creature standing so much longer than usual before her little mirror, across the gilt top of which hung a bright and beautiful crimson feather of some foreign bird, a present from Harry Needham. At last she was ready to go—and as she had to walk to Leith before church-time, it was necessary to leave home without her mother and sisters, who were going to a nearer place of worship. Margaret was glad of this; for she had been afraid that her mother might go with her to the head of Leith Walk to see Laurence, when no Laurence might be there—so she took up her little red Bible, and knowing that she was going to a good place, she went away with a happy but a beating heart. Some of the church-bells were beginning to ring, and she feared she might be too late;—yet she well knew Harry would wait for her—so she walked at her usual pace through the yet unbroken silence of the Sabbath-streets, on which few people had begun to appear.

Her heart was indeed glad within her, when she saw the young sailor at the spot. His brown sunburnt face was all one smile of exulting joy—and his bold clear eyes burned through the black hair that clustered over his forehead. There was not a handsomer, finer-looking boy in the British navy. Although serving before the mast, as many a noble lad has done, he was the son of a poor gentleman; and as

he came up to Margaret Lyndsay, in his smartest suit, with his white straw-hat, his clean shirt-neck tied with a black ribband, and a small yellow cane in his hand, a brighter boy and a fairer girl never met in affection in the calm sunshine of a Scottish Sabbath-day.

"Why have not you brought Laurence with you?" Harry made her put her arm within his, and then told her that it was not her brother's day on shore. Now all the calm air was filled with the sound of bells, and Leith Walk covered with well-dressed families. The nursery-gardens on each side were almost in their greatest beauty—so soft and delicate the verdure of the young imbedded trees, and so bright the glow of intermingled early flowers. "Let us go to Leith by a way I have discovered," said the joyful sailor—and he drew Margaret gently away from the public walk, into a retired path winding with many little white gates through these luxuriantly cultivated enclosures. The insects were dancing in the air—birds singing all about them—the sky was without a cloud—and a bright dazzling line of light was all that was now seen for the sea. The youthful pair loitered in their happiness—they never marked that the bells had ceased ringing; and when at last they hurried to reach the chapel, the door was closed, and they heard the service chaunting. Margaret durst not knock at the door, or go in so long after worship was begun; and she secretly upbraided herself for her forgetfulness of a well-

known and holy hour. She felt unlike herself walking on the street during the time of church, and beseeched Harry to go with her out of the sight of the windows, that all seemed watching her in her neglect of Divine worship. So they bent their steps towards the shore.

Harry Needham had not perhaps had any preconceived intention to keep Margaret from church; but he was very well pleased, that, instead of being with her in a pew there, in a crowd, he was now walking alone with her on the brink of his own element. The tide was coming fast in, hurrying on its beautiful little bright ridges of variegated foam, by short successive encroachments over the smooth hard level shore, and impatient, as it were, to reach the highest line of intermingled sea-weed, silvery sand, and deep-stained or glittering shells. The friends, or lovers—and their short dream was both friendship and love—retreated playfully from every little watery wall that fell in pieces at their feet, and Margaret turned up her sweet face in the sunlight to watch the slow dream-like motion of the sea-mews, who seemed sometimes to be yielding to the breath of the shifting air, and sometimes obeying only some wavering impulse of joy within their own white-plumaged breasts. Or she walked softly behind them, as they alighted on the sand, that she might come near enough to observe that beautifully wild expression that is in the eyes of all winged creatures whose home is on the sea.

Alas! home—church—every thing on earth was forgotten—for her soul was filled exclusively with its present joy. She had never before, in all her life, been down at the sea-shore—and she never again was within hearing of its bright, sunny, hollow-sounding, and melancholy waves.

"See," said Harry, with a laugh, "the kirks have scaled, as you say here in Scotland—the pier-head is like a wood of bonnets.—Let us go there, and I think I can shew them the bonniest face among them a'." The fresh sea breeze had tinged Margaret's pale face with crimson,—and her heart now sent up a sudden blush to deepen and brighten that beauty. They mingled with the cheerful, but calm and decent crowd, and stood together at the end of the pier, looking towards the ship. "That is our frigate, Margaret, the Tribune;—she sits like a bird on the water, and sails well, both in calm and storm." The poor girl looked at the ship with her flags flying, till her eyes filled with tears. "If we had a glass, like one my father once had, we might, perhaps, see Laurence." And for the moment she used the word "father" without remembering what and where he was in his misery. "There is one of our jigger-rigged boats coming right before the wind.—Why, Margaret, this is the last opportunity you may have of seeing your brother. We may sail to-morrow; nay to-night."—A sudden wish to go on board the ship seized Margaret's heart. Harry saw the struggle—and wiling her down a flight of steps, in a

moment lifted her into the boat, which, with the waves rushing in foam within an inch of the gunwale, went dancing out of harbour, and was soon half-way over to the anchored frigate.

The novelty of her situation, and of all the scene around, at first prevented the poor girl from thinking deliberately of the great error she had committed, in thus employing her Sabbath hours in a way so very different to what she had been accustomed; but she soon could not help thinking what she was to say to her mother when she went home, and was obliged to confess that she had not been at church at all, and had paid a visit to her brother on board the ship. She knew that she had almost deceived her mother from the beginning; and remembered her former fault in going to the theatre, and then being accessary to a falsehood in order to conceal it. And now the loud laughing merriment that filled the boat, struck her heart as a violation of the Sabbath. She then tried to believe, that the desire alone to see her brother had brought her there, but Harry Needham's arm was round her side, and she felt with a pang that she had acted contrary to all the practice and principles of her former life. It was very sinful in her thus to disobey her own conscience and her mother's will, and the tears came into her eyes. The young sailor thought she was afraid, and only pressed her closer to him, with a few soothing words. At that moment, a sea-mew came winnowing its way to-

wards the boat, and one of the sailors rising up with a musquet, took aim at it as it flew over their heads. Margaret suddenly started up, crying, "Do not kill the pretty bird," and stumbling, fell forward upon the man, who also lost his balance. A flaw of wind struck the mainsail—the helmsman was heedless—the sheet fast—and the boat instantly filling, went down in a moment head foremost, in twenty fathom water.

The accident was seen both from the shore and the ship; and a crowd of boats put off to their relief But death was beforehand with them all; and, when the frigate's boat came to the place, nothing was seen upon the waves. Two of the men, it was supposed, had gone to the bottom entangled with ropes or beneath the sail,—in a few moments the grey head of the old steersman was apparent, and he was lifted up with an oar—drowned. A woman's clothes were next descried; and Margaret was taken up with something heavy weighing down the body. It was Harry Needham who had sunk in trying to save her; and in one of his hands was grasped a tress of her hair that had given way in the desperate struggle. There seemed to be faint symptoms of life in both; but they were utterly insensible. The crew, among which was Laurence Lyndsay, pulled swiftly back to the ship; and the bodies were first of all laid down together side by side in the captain's cabin.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARGARET's mother had gone with her other two daughters to the Grey-Friars' Church, and after service had taken a walk with them round the outskirts of that part of the town where she thought it likely they might meet with the little party coming up from Leith. No one who saw them walking quietly along could have supposed that she was a deserted wife—one girl blind—and the other an object of the deepest human compassion. For the stillness of the hallowed day had breathed into the mother's breast a perfect resignation; her face wore a calm smile in the sunshine; and she was respectably dressed in some of those garments which she had bought in the undisturbed days of her humble prosperity. The blind girl was neatly attired in a blue gown—the colour she loved best, because it was that of the sweet smelling violets, and the straw-bonnet of her own workmanship was gaily bedecked with ribbands of a fainter hue. Poor Marion was decently and neatly clad in sober and Quaker-like grey; and always on the

Sabbath she seemed less like an afflicted creature, partly from imitation of others, and partly, no doubt, from dim intimations within her darkened spirit of its dependence on something called God.

Not meeting with those they sought, and afraid of being surprised on the street by the sound of the afternoon-bells, Alice took her daughters home, and instead of again going to church, read to them some chapters of the Bible. In these and other innocent occupations, hour after hour, wore away, and still no appearance of Margaret. Such a thing had never happened before; and the mother, after a short fit of doubt and displeasure, was suddenly seized with affright and terror.—"Can she have deceived me, as she went out with her Bible in her hand; and is she forgetting me and her God, and his Sabbath, in company with that English laddie?" But that unjust suspicion passed by in a moment, and then she thought of sudden sickness—even of sudden death. The city-clocks tolled six, and the dull iron sound drove the belief of some fatal calamity deeper and deeper into her quaking heart. "Sit still, children, till I come back," and, with tottering knees, she walked down the lane into the wide street.

The rumour of the death of the very humblest individual by flood or fire, or any other lamentable accident, sometimes passes through a populous town almost as quickly as that of some great national event, a victorious battle, or fatal overthrow. Open hearts greedily swallow it in broad and in obscure places,—it

goes into the dwellings of rich and poor,—and for a while thousands upon thousands repeat a name, which, an hour before, was known only to a few families, and which, in a day or two, will drop away from the column of a newspaper into silence and forgetfulness. Alice saw four or five people standing together, and speaking earnestly, at the entrance of a court, and heard the words, —" All drowned, poor creatures, in breaking the Lord's day—a bonny bit young lassie, they say, pleasuring wi' her sweetheart, and baith called before the God they had forgotten." She stood close to the groupe, as if she had been one of them; but she was not able to connect together any more of their words. " Gude preserve us!" said a woman, with a child in her arms; " Wha is this among us wi' sic an a white face of consternation? Are na ye the schoolmistress in the lane down by yonner?"—" I am; and if a lassie has been drowned, it is my ain daughter Margaret, for she went out this morning, and I ken now that she will be brought hame a corpse, if ever brought hame at a' out of the sea, where Harry Needham has let her be drowned on the Lord's day."

The sound of wheels was heard coming down a steep street that led into that where they were standing; and a coach approached at a foot's-pace, surrounded by a considerable crowd, who walked by it, not like a mob, but silently, and with composed faces. It passed by, and Alice, although nearly blind, thought she saw at the window one in a sailor's dress, like her son.

"Wha's in the coach?" asked one of the women.—"The schoolmistress' daughter; some says she's dead, and ithers that she's leevin'; but I saw her face, and I'm sure she's dead; for the bonny een were shut, and her cheeks had a blue and drowned look."

There was no want of pity and commiseration when Alice said,—"The drowned bairn's mine." Every heart then was, for a time, made equally compassionate by the sight of such deep affliction brought home to them all; and when the door of the house was shut by the sailor-boy on Margaret and her mother, both equally insensible to what was passing, the crowd, in a few minutes, went away silent, one by one, and many with tears in their eyes. "He's a fine callant, yon sailor, and ane that wad na flinch in fecht for a' his greeting so bitterly the noo. Saw ye hoo he lifted the poor bit lassie out o' the cotch, as she had been nae heavier than a windle-strae? The folk are saying he was na wi' her when she was drowned, but came rowing like desperation frae the frigate o' war in the Roads, to save ane that he kent na was his ain sister till he rais'd her up wi' his oar, dead and drowned, out o' the cruel salt sea."

But Margaret Lyndsay was not drowned, and was now lying in her bed, restored both to life and to her senses. One question only had she asked at her brother, and the answer to it was enough to make her content that the coldness and the pains of death were creeping all over her body. Harry Needham was dead.

She now felt no shame to meet her mother's face—no sorrow to depart from them all—no regret that she was to leave the light of day, and to be buried. Even the fear of God's judgment was for a while absent,—and her soul cared for nothing here or hereafter, since she had been the cause of sweet Harry's death. Esther sat by her bed-side, and felt for her cold hand. Now had come the time when the blind was, in her turn, to administer comfort; and the soft, sweet, mournful tone of her voice could not well be heard without comfort by her sister's spirit, however sorely and hopelessly distressed. He who was drowned had been known to her only for a few weeks. She who spake had been beloved from her earliest remembrances. But then, it was not merely that he was lost to her, for she had expected him every day to be sailing away for ever; but the unendurable and soul-killing agony was, that he was dead,—all his glee, mirth, happiness, and beauty extinguished for ever and ever, and that, too, by her own sinfulness and guilt.

Her mother had no upbraidings in her eyes, for Margaret had strength enough to tell, in a few words, the simple truth. But even if her mother had supposed that there was wickedness in so carelessly behaving on the Sabbath, (and to the heart of a religious mother so troubled a slight profanation of that day was a heinous thing,) Margaret would as yet have heeded her not. But exhausted and sickened nature sank down into sleep, while they who looked upon her face pray-

ed that it might be free from all terrible dreams; and as soon as her eye-lids were heavily shut, and her hearing locked up, her mother, Laurence, and Esther, knelt down together, with their faces upon the bed, and joined their low sobbing voices in fervent ejaculations of prayer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

After an illness of a good many weeks duration, Margaret Lyndsay was again able to rise from her bed at the usual early hour, and to attend to the concerns of the small household. Her life had been in great danger for some days, and she had known it. At first inconsolable grief and unallayed self-accusation had made her pray for death; but life is sweet to the young, and the love of it had been insensibly reawakened in her heart. Her mother and sister had partly succeeded in convincing her, from her own worst confessions, that the death of poor Harry Needham could not be laid at her door; and although a secret self-blame was at her heart, and often suddenly filled her eyes with tears, yet in general her mind was tranquil on that sad account; and conscience, which will not suffer itself to be long wronged by passion, asserted its own claims to peace.

But on reviving from that fever, Margaret found that there was now greater need for her exertions than ever. The school had stood still during her long and

doubtful illness; and it did not seem easy to bring together again all her little scholars. There had been a break; and it is often difficult, even in humblest situations, to take up the thread of life. One or two parents had changed their opinion of Margaret since her Sabbath-day adventure, disastrous as it had been; others, who, of themselves, would have had no such thought, affected to partake in the judgment of the more austere; but to others her innocent calamity only the more endeared her, and they kindly told her that God did not spare the very best in his inscrutable dispensations. Margaret observed both the cold looks of them who disapproved or pretended to do so, and the kinder manner of them who pitied her, with the same meek and humble spirit; and she hoped that neither might be lost upon her future conduct. Her sin, great or small, had been sorely punished; but that punishment only turned her soul in upon itself in lowly contrition, and strengthened, not shook, her faith in the unchangeable goodness and mercy of God.

The very day after the fatal event, the frigate had left the Firth, and Laurence had been obliged to give a silent farewell to Margaret's lips as she lay asleep. Expence was necessarily incurred during her sickness, although the benevolent physician who attended her as regularly and tenderly as if she had been the daughter of a rich man, would take no fee from the poor widow. He saw what kind of a family, under Providence, he was rescuing from affliction; and the name of Gre-

gory was one that, illustrious as it was in the halls of science, had its greatest and truest glory in the obscure dwellings of wretchedness and want. The mother, who had formerly depended so much on Margaret, had now become as active and awakened as in her more cheerful days, and exchanged the drooping serenity of the comforted for the springing hope of the comforter. But above all, this affliction brought up, from the silent regions of its growth, the beautiful strength of the blind girl's character. No eager selfish delights had she ever known of her own; and now all the love and affection of her sinless spirit flowed up like a gushing spring when the green flowery surface has been stirred, towards her elder sister, whose hand had taught her to set down without fear her dark steps, and from whose sweet gay talk she had strengthened the silence of her own heart, and gathered many pure joys to delight her when sitting in the stillness of her uncompanioned solitude. She sung her hymns by the bed-side; and sometimes, too, her old Scottish ballads; and that music was a medicine that has lulled to sleep, or quieted the throbbing pulse, when any other might have been administered in vain.

By the end of July Margaret Lyndsay was completely recovered. All her beauty had returned; and some of the neighbours said that the "puir lassie was far bonnier than ever." Now and then one of her scholars would make her and her mother some little useful present; no parent suffered her children to be

in arrears with their small weekly payments; even poor people bought things of Esther's manufacture for which they had no use, just to put a few shillings in their way; and these not unobserved humanities which no doubt are always passing among human creatures, even in states of most abject penury, send a strength to the hearts of those who experience them far beyond that of the cold pence of heartless or reluctant charity.

It now seemed, therefore, as if the summer would pass away with such happiness as they were all well satisfied to possess; and even if each succeeding season of the year were to bring its own distress, they were prepared to meet it, with hearts that had all experienced severe and searching sorrows. Laurence had been spared in the great battle with the French on the first of June, and would be coming to see them, perhaps, during the autumn or winter. And oh! "God of mercy," would the mother often think, and sometimes say, "My Walter may yet return to my bosom, as he promised, and all his sins be forgiven by his Maker, as by me they will be forgotten, as they had never been."

They were all sitting together by the fire-side one cold raw September night, somewhat low-spirited, and the mother more than usually desponding and disconsolate—for fits of melancholy overpowered her at times in spite of herself and her children, that spread its dim influence over them likewise—when a single

hesitating knock came to the door. Margaret opened it, and a person putting a letter into her hand, went away into the darkness, without saying a word. She brought the letter to the fire, and stooping down to read the direction by that light, she saw that the feeble and faint scrawl was in the hand-writing of her father. It was not for her, but for her mother; and although she would fain have known its contents, before she gave it into her mother's hand in her present doleful mood, yet that was impossible; so, in reaching it over, she just said, "Oh, me! Oh, me!—it is surely my father's writing. It may be to tell us that he is coming home at last."

Mrs Lyndsay opened the letter, and looked at it, but she saw only the first words, "My dear Alice," and the few irregular lines that stopped in the middle of the first page.

"I cannot see to read it, Margaret, and my heart is sick—but read it thou—and be the contents dismal, as I know they are, even unto the fear of death, leave not out one single word, however small. Let us all together hear the worst." Margaret first read the letter into herself; and accustomed as she had been for some months to grief, she was then able, and just able, to do as she was bid.

"My Dear Alice,

"I am on my death-bed. For sake of the love of our youth, and of Him who died, that sinners like me

might not utterly perish, come, if you can, to the Laigh Wynd, opposite the Barracks, Glasgow. You will find me, by asking for Jacob Russel, at the shop of Mrs Alison, a widow. Give the love of their dying father to our children.

"WALTER LYNDSAY."

Till this hour, there had always been hope in the house. Not very often did Alice speak of their father to Margaret and Esther, for, in such a case, thoughtful, and affectionate, and forgiving silence was best for them all. But never had the deserted wife lain down one night on her bed—never had she risen from it one morning—without remembering him in her prayers; and believing devoutly, that the bonds of sin, though strong, often snap suddenly asunder, and that Walter could love no one in this world, as he had once loved her, she had convinced her soul, in her desertion, that her husband would most certainly return, and that they might yet be buried side by side, or in one grave. That trust was now known to be a delusion, for it was too plain, that he would not have so written, had he not felt that his hour was nearly come.

Neither Margaret nor Esther could think otherwise, than that their father was dying. Margaret read over, many a hundred times, the miserable paper, now completely soaked through with tears, and looked at the shape of every letter, syllable, and word, to see if she could extract comfort from one firmer line here and

there; but comfort there was none to be found, for palsied, and almost torpid must the hand have been, once so strong and dexterous, that had contrived, by many renewals, to finish the faint and blotted scrawl that solemnly yet humbly implored love to come to the bed of sin, remorse, and death.

An evil spirit seemed to have put in the letter at the door, to turn their hearts against the God of judgment, and then to have disappeared in the mists and darkness of night; and, sure enough, despair took possession of them; and during the night, no one sought to stop another's groans. Poor Marion alone slept.

CHAPTER XIX.

LONG before daylight Alice and Margaret left their house—not fearing to trust the two helpless creatures alone and asleep for a few hours, till a good neighbour, who had promised to take charge of them, would go to them in the morning; and they walked, almost without speaking, to Braehead. They awakened, as quietly as they could, the same friendly man who had formerly taken their furniture in his cart to their lodging in the lane; and Alice told him, in a few words, that her husband was at the point of death, and had written for her to come instantly to Glasgow. "If you can take us there in your cart, John, we will pay you day's wages, before many weeks go by—if not, we must just try to walk, although neither of us are very strong, and it is, they say, a lang dreigh road. But, you may be sure, my heart langs sair sair to be wi' my husband, gin it be possible, this very night." John Walker was a poor labouring man—a carter—who earned a subsistence to a large family by hard work from morning to night; it was impossible to have

fewer fine feelings than he had—and his manners, often coarse, were perhaps sometimes even brutal. But he had a heart, and had always shown to the Lyndsays a respectful kindness, scarcely to be expected from one of his disposition and habits. He yoked his horse to the cart without delay—put into it a bundle of hay and a bag of oats—covered Mrs Lyndsay with a thick duffle cloak of his wife's, and Margaret with his own great-coat—and drove off on their way to Glasgow, before the light of the frosty stars had yet become faint on the approach of the morning.

John Walker scarcely spoke ten words the first ten miles, except to his horse—a tall, raw-boned grey—that stept freely out at the rate of better than four miles an hour, without his usual weight of a ton and a half of free-stone from the quarry. About half an hour after perfect daylight, John turned about to Alice and Margaret, who were sitting among the straw in the cart, and said, "Weel, weel, God bless you, Mrs Lyndsay—how do you feel yourself noo?" They both answered him at once, that they were well, and could not be sufficiently thankful to him for his friendly behaviour. "Your gudeman may na be so ill as he thinks—there's aften a lang way and many years atween sair-heart-sickness and the point o' death. I'll wauger half-a-croon that he's no at the point o' death, and wunna be for a whileock. I hae been saying a prayer for him, puir man, these last twa miles. We a' liked you—the haill family o' you at Braehead.

Ma faith, ye's pay me naething for this job—unless I bring back your gudeman wi' us, alive and weel, to Embro'. Mair unlikely things has happened!" The poor woman listened to every word—and tried and tried to believe there might yet be hope, while her tears were falling down upon the straw. But John's last inconceivable thought of bringing her husband back in their very cart quite smote to pieces all the gathering delusion—and she knew that Walter was dying, or at that very moment dead.

The cart stopped for an hour each time at two small way-side public-houses—and while the horse was baiting, the travellers sat by the kitchen-fire. The respectable appearance of the mother, and the extreme beauty of the daughter—they were so like, that their relationship was plain to all—at once ensured them a kind reception; and at both places, after the mistress of the house had spoke a few words with John Walker, nothing could exceed the eager and heartfelt pity she expressed for them in their affliction. Refreshment was pressed upon them, and given into their hands at the warm fire-side with condolence and encouragement. Such outbreakings of the native goodness of the human heart sent a comfort even unto their despair; and Margaret once ventured to smile in her mother's face, as if to say, "Let us hope,"—but the wife was not able, with all her efforts, to return the smile, and her features were only drawn together in a ghastly and hysterical convulsion.

Before dusk, Alice saw, far off to the left, the high grounds at the head of Clydesdale, and the beautiful green hill of Tintock. Under the shadow of that hill she had been born—there had she passed her young innocent days; and though she had for many years ceased often to remember those places, and then but dimly and for a brief dream, yet now that the real objects themselves were before her eyes, their power drew her into the very bosom of that happy life—and she shuddered at her own image, and that of her loving and beloved Walter, on their marriage-day. Margaret, who saw her eyes fixed long in the same direction, and heard a deep groan, feared that her mother was about to swoon,—but she only said, "Yon's the hill o' Tintock, Margaret;" and Margaret, who knew the name well, at once understood what was passing in her mother's heart. In another hour or two they passed "Bothwell Banks," now not "blooming fair," according to Esther's favourite song, but with their rich golden autumnal groves shrouded in the thickening darkness of evening—then the way-side houses began to thicken—and by and by the wide gleam of the great iron-founderies shot fitfully round about the sky. "I'm thinking," says John Walker, "that this maun just be Glasgow;" and as the evening bugle-horn was blown in the barracks, the cart stopped short at the end of its journey before the well-lighted and variously adorned window of Widow Alison, Grocer and Meal-Monger.

John Walker drew up his cart close to the pave-

ment, and remained with it while they walked into the shop. "Ken you ony thing, Mrs Alison, o' ane Jacob Russel?" said Alice, while Margaret stood close behind her. "Wha is't that speers?" said the well-fed pursy Widow Alison, who was at that moment whirling down a yard of twine from the roller, to tie a two-pound parcel of brown-sugar. But, getting no answer, she looked up, and met those two countenances, both deadly pale, looking upon her with fixed eyes. "Gude safe us, women, what d'ye want wi' him?—he's no far aff the dead-thraw—gang round the corner into the wynd, up three stairs to the left, and in at the right hand door, and ye'll find him, aiblins, and his Miss—for she's nae wife yon."

It was Saturday night, and people were coming into the shop like a bee-hive. A staring attention had been directed to the two poor creatures, but they heeded not, saw not, felt not any insult, however coarse, and Alice meekly asked to be suffered to pass out of the shop. John Walker had stopt his cart and was at the door. "I see stabling ayont the street at yon lamp-post,—you can fin' your ain way to him up the wynd, and I'll no let an hour pass till I see you baith again."

Margaret took her mother's arm, and they went as they had been directed. They soon found the door, and listened,—but heard no sound, except that of something breathing. "There's life in the room," whispered Margaret to her mother, and then gently

tapped. No answer was made, so they opened the door and went in. They saw by the flickering light of an oil-lamp, bare, damp-stained, yellow walls, and a strong breath of wind came upon their faces from a window, with some broken glass or paper panes. Turning towards the breathing sound, they beheld a low wretched bed, in which there seemed to be a sleeper, covered with a brown rug or carpet. Alice went up to it, and lifting tenderly a small bit of this miserable coverlet, she saw her husband's face, marked with certain symptoms of approaching dissolution. There could be no mistake—no hope—Walter Lyndsay was a dying man.

There were no chairs in the room—only a wooden form, on which mother and daughter sat down. On the table near the bed, on which the oil-lamp stood, were a glass, seemingly with some ardent spirits,—a small bottle, labelled laudanum,—a bit of oat-meal bread, and a few cold potatoes. Not a word was spoken. His wife rose several times, and put her ear to his lips,—she kissed them,—and sat down again on the form. Margaret took off her cloak, and let it drop slowly and by degrees above the rug that alone sheltered her dying father from the cold night-air that filled the room almost to freezing. "Oh God! this is a dreadful sight, mair than ony mortal can bear," lowly groaned forth the wife; "pray for me, Margaret,—pray for me,—for my heart is like to burst." Margaret knelt down, awed far beyond sobbing or

tears, with her head just touching the edge of the bed, and her clasped and uplifted hands close to her father's knees, that were drawn up by pain as he slept.

The door again opened, and an emaciated woman came in like a ghost into the glimmering room. Seeing two figures, one with her head bowed down, and her face covered with her hands, and the other kneeling, she stopt short in the middle of the floor, and said with a hollow voice, "What is this—who are you—and whence came ye here?" Margaret looked around, and they knew each other. "You are his daughter,—I remember you well;—is this his wife who hides her face,—your mother and his wife?"—"She is so indeed." The miserable creature went and sat down on a seat in the window, where the wind waved up and down her ragged and rusty hair, and all the while kept her sunken but wild eyes directed towards the bed, and the two figures by its side.

The rug moved, for the dying man had awoke, and he now strove to lift up his head. His face became uncovered, and his eyes were open although they seemed as yet to see nothing. Alice stood up before him with her meek well-known face, and it was in a moment visible to his whole soul. "Thou art come in time, Alice, to let me die not unforgiven. Oh! a mother's curse is enough,—let not that of a wife's be mine too,—deserved although it be, Alice, for in thee there was no sin."—"Your mother unsaid that cruel curse, and her last words were a blessing on her son,—and I

am here to bless thee, too, Walter:—and Oh! if it were possible, to die that you might live." The awfulness of the scene gave strength both to her mind and her frame, and she said, almost with a smile, "Behold your daughter, Margaret, our first-born, kneeling at your bed-side." He rose up in his bed, and gazed with a smile upon her face, now turned towards him, till his eyes grew glazed,—"Kiss me, both of you." His wife and daughter did as they were bidden,—his white cold lips returned their kisses, —something gurgled in his throat, and he fell back on his chaff pillow. The sins and the sorrows of Walter Lyndsay were at an end.

CHAPTER XX.

The widow and her daughter would have been ill off indeed during this their greatest trial, without the kindness of John Walker. He found in the stabler, to whose house he had taken his cart, an old East-country friend, and told him the melancholy business of his journey. The general claims of humanity are much strengthened by any particular circumstance attending them, however slight; and this man's interest was forthwith awakened towards the poor women, who had come in distress from his native place. A comfortable bed-room was got ready for them, and to it they were removed, before midnight, from the bedstead on which lay the body of Walter Lyndsay. After every thing had been made decent about it, with the assistance of that other emaciated and death-like woman, whom, at such a season, they treated as it became Christians to treat one who so deeply tasted the bitterness of sin, the door of the fatal room was shut and locked. At the bottom of the stair Alice stopt to speak a word to that unhappy person, and to give her a trifle to

buy food, of which she seemed in great want,—but she had disappeared, and they could see no more of her that night.

The next day was the Sabbath, and it was past in their room. Alice could not move from bed that day —but Margaret was up as usual, and watched every little restless motion of her mother. Nothing could be said by one to the other, much as they were mutually beloved, in an affliction like this; and they were both stunned into silence by a blow which had removed from their souls one great dear anxiety, never till then, for one hour, entirely absent during a whole long year. There was a completeness in the widow's desolation that almost allowed her to sleep,—and, once or twice, when Margaret drew the curtains and spoke to her, although her eyes were but half closed, she made no reply.

Another day and two other nights dragged their dark hours along,—and their light ones worse than the dark. On Tuesday forenoon, John Walker came into the room in a suit of black, with white muslin weepers on his sleeves, and a crape on his hat, which he held in his hand.—He sat down, and in a minute or two, said, "One o'clock is the hour when the funeral is to leave the Wynd—it will be but sma'—but our landlord is a decent man, and twa or three o' his maist respectable neebors are to walk by the coffin.—There's naebody but mysel' to take the head,—but Is'e do it wi' a sair heart, for I baith liked and re-

specit your husband; and although but a coorse man in my way, I hae grat mair than ance since twal o'clock on Saturday nicht." So saying, John looked at his old-dialled silver watch, and went away in silence.

"I wish you would shut the shutters for an hour," said the widow, "and I will lie down." Margaret did so; but she left a small opening, and looked through it down upon the street, which was all in the lively bustle of eager and hurrying trade. She kept her eyes on the dark entrance of the wynd, and the funeral came out into the crowd of carts and people, unheeded except by two or three boys and girls who stood gazing, and sometimes laughing, as the small procession moved off from the place where they had gathered to see it, and by a few people here and there leaning indifferently over the half-doors of their shops. One great waggon, with several horses, almost ran against the pall, and Margaret shuddered as if her father had been lying there alive. It found its way, however, through the tide of existence, and, slow as it went along, soon passed by out of the reach of Margaret's weeping eyes. She said nothing to her mother of what she had seen, and then closed the window-shutters entirely. In less than an hour John Walker returned. His face wore a look of composure, almost of indifference, for dust had been given to dust; and that look gave a kind of cold comfort to the poor girl's heart, speaking, as it

did, of the fruitlessness and the folly of struggling with or repining at the finished decree of God.

Towards the afternoon the widow rose, and some very plain and cheap mournings, which she had ordered early on Monday morning, being brought, she and Margaret put them on, and, as soon as day-light was gone, she said, that they would go out and breathe a little air; and they bent their steps towards the burial-ground of the old Cathedral. They soon found the sexton's house, near the ruined arch of the gate-way, and he went with them to show Walter Lyndsay's grave. He was an old, seemingly careless taciturn man, and putting his foot on one of the fresh-covered heaps, (for there were several not far from each other,) he said, "That's it, I'm thinking," put the pence that were given him into his pocket, and hobbled away over the pavement of the flat tombstones.

They sat down, one at the head and the other at the foot of the grave. The shadow of the great Cathedral was over them, and the gloom of that adjacent hill, with its black pine-grove. Thousands and tens of thousands of graves were visible around them, in the uncertain moonlight—grassy-turfs—deep-sunk slabs—headstones—tablets—tombs and monuments,—but they saw nothing but that one single heap. The night was a raw early frost, but they felt it not—the clock on the tower of the Cathedral tolled eight, and the dull deep reverberating sounds were heard as if at distance, and no way regarding them; but something

white came before their eyes; they both looked up, and, with a sudden superstitious fear, saw a being like a ghost standing close by the grave.

"I would not have come here," said a hollow voice, which they recognised at once, "if I had known who were before me." Alice said, "Poor unhappy thing, we are all of us sinners; there's no anger now in my heart towards thee, whatever there once may have been; but I wish you would gang awa and sit down on a stane o'er by yonder, and leave me and my daughter to ourselves." The figure did so, and removed to a tomb within an angle of the Cathedral walls.

After sitting a long long time, with few words, but many thoughts and feelings, till they were both forced to feel the chillness of the air, and of the grave covered with hoar-frost, Alice and Margaret rose up, and went to the place where the woman was still sitting. "Tell me what you can about my husband—but let it be in few words."—"Four months ago he went to Edinburgh, with my consent, just to get a look of you all, as you well know. I was then thought to be dying, and he resolved to stay by me till I died. It is true what I am now saying, that I would have let him go away altogether, and leave me to my fate; but he would not. He promised to me to return to you, and be reconciled to you after my death. But he grew suddenly worse than me, and is dead before this miserable sinner."—"Were you aye kind to him, when you saw he was dying?"—"Yes, I was kind to him.

He was your husband, not mine; but the guilty can be kind to one another; and I did all I could for him on his death-bed; but, oh! I have been long weak, weak, indeed!—Look at these bones, and say that you are satisfied with my sufferings." The poor creature was thinly and miserably clad, and her emaciated body had little left for the decay of the grave.

Every faintest remain of anger or aversion to the hollow-voiced wretch died away in the widow's bosom. She knew not under what temptations, or in what ignorance the sin had been committed; but she knew well what had been its punishment. "O tell me where you hae sleepit Saturday, Sunday, and Monday night, for you are bluidless and cauld, like ane without food or shelter?"—"I do not remember where I fell down on the Saturday night; on Monday night I was put into a cell, and let out in the morning; and last night I came out to this church-yard, where I heard he was to be buried, and I tried to sleep below a tomb, but it was bitter bitter cold. Yet all this cannot kill me, although I am far gone in a consumption—although my lungs are rotten—and although, save the cold potatoes you saw on the table, which I huddled into my lap that night as we left the room, as God is my witness, have I had nothing since that time to eat!"

Margaret had a piece of biscuit in her pocket, which had been given to her by some kind hand, on her journey to Glasgow, and she held it out to the famished ghost. "Take it away, take it away, for I wish to

starve myself;" and with that she clutched it out of Margaret's hand, and greedily devoured it. At the same time, she held her glaring eyes upon the girl, and muttered,—" I dashed you to the ground—I dashed you to the ground, and like a she-devil carried off your father to sin and death, yet you pity me, and give me food!"

Margaret and her mother, unable to bear any more of such horror, pointed to two or three shillings—it was all they had to spare—on the tombstone; and forgetting their own griefs before such a spectacle, committed her to God's mercy; and leaving the churchyard as quickly as they could, retired to the house where they lodged.

CHAPTER XXI.

The widow and Margaret, on their return home to Edinburgh, found the two helpless creatures, whom they had left to the care of a neighbour, perfectly well; and Esther, whose thoughtful mind had prepared itself for the worst, heard of her father's death with resignation and composure. No account was given to her of his last hour, for that would have unnecessarily distressed and haunted her tender heart in its darkness; but she was let understand that he had died without apparent pain, and in such a frame of mind as Christians could have desired. At the recital the tears quietly flowed down her cheeks from her sightless eyes, but there was no loud grief—and her feelings on this occasion partook of the equanimity of her whole character, which had grown up in silent pursuits peculiar to herself, and had seldom been disturbed by what more or less agitates all those who take a part, however humble, in the activity of life. No doubt, the appearance of the blind child sitting, as usual, at her work, with the same sweet smile upon her face, which no sorrow was

suffered to scare away, and thinking within the sinlessness of her silent heart of her father's former happiness—his going away from them—and his death at last,—contributed much to restore to peace both her mother and sister. In her they saw a living lesson of lowly resignation. She had lost a natural protector for ever as well as they; but she trusted to God in her blindness, and feared not that He would continue to her his inward light. Her fingers plied unceasingly their daily task; and sometimes even she said, that, if it would not disturb them, she would sing them a song—and did so till the sweet sounds calmed their melancholy hearts. The goodness of God was, indeed, constantly visible to them in the unbroken happiness of this girl; and often, when she herself knew not that any eyes were looking at her, those both of her mother and Margaret drew from her placid countenance unspeakable comfort.

They both felt that to repine at the decrees of Providence was not only fruitless, but sinful. While there was life, there was hope; but now Walter Lyndsay was not, and their souls submitted. Theirs was not a barren religion; but under it their hearts sent up both feelings and thoughts. They had never been hard upon him, when he lived, in their conversations about the unhappy man; they had been prepared to welcome back the sinner with all love to his home; and now, that all such fears, hopes, and affections, were buried in the grave, they looked on that life which was henceforth to

be their lot, and turned themselves to endure its hardships, and to discharge its duties. Often did they see each other's tears—and tears there were shed by both, which each knew of, only for herself, in dark and silent midnights. These, Nature would not yield up, in the passionate selfishness of brooding sorrow, even to religion; but they interfered not with the more tranquil hours of stated employment. The family were now, as before, regular and industrious: and the hum of the little school revived, like the sound of a hive of bees when the cloud-shadows have again let out the sunshine.

Among the affluent there is sometimes a luxury of grief which is altogether unknown to the poor. There is such a thing as a pampered sorrow which the heart cherishes without being aware of its own selfish enjoyment. Indolent, perhaps, and called to the discharge of no duties, the mourners give themselves up to the indulgence of feelings which are known to be natural, and which they conceive of as amiable, till the remembrance of the loss sustained becomes evidently fainter and fainter in a mind still surrounded with the comforts and blessings of life; and at last the afflicted return to their usual avocations without having undergone much real or soul-searching and heart-humbling distress. But in the abodes of poverty, there is no room, no leisure, for such indulgence. On the very day that death smites a dear object, the living are called by necessity, not to lie down and weep, but to rise up and

work. The daily meal must be set out by their own hands, although there is in the house one cold mouth to be fed no more; and, in the midst of occupations needful for them who survive, must preparations be made for returning, decently, dust to dust. This is real sorrow and suffering; but, although sharp, the soul is framed to sustain it;—and sighing and sobbing, weeping and wailing, groans heaved in wilful impiety, outcries to a cruel Heaven, and the delirious tearing of hair, these are not the shows of grief which Nature exhibits on the earthen floors, and beneath the smoky rafters of the houses of the poor. The great and eternal law of death is executed there in an awful silence; and then the survivors go, each his way, upon his own especial duty which is marked out to him, and which he must perform, or perhaps he and the family utterly perish.

Under such circumstances, the discharge of duty is painful, indeed—but it is also consoling. If the heart then knoweth its own bitterness, so knoweth it also the sweet infusion of resigned faith.—If the father of the house die, the fire must still be lighted—the floor swept—the board spread—the cradle rocked, that holds one, since morning, an orphan. Not otherwise will God feed the poor. But the hand is connected with the heart—and both must exert themselves to procure peace. So was it now with this family. Every thing went on as before. They all wore mournings—and, when the scholars left them to themselves, the

room was more silent than formerly—and there were, as yet, fewer visits from neighbours. Natural feeling, whose truth and sincerity, in such cases, is a surer guide than the artificial delicacy of custom, kept the families in the lane for a while aloof, except on very short visits. But in a few weeks smiles were seen on the faces both of Alice and Margaret, when friendly greetings were interchanged—questions and replies passed between them all on ordinary topics, just as before—and both took, or seemed to take, the same interest as ever in the goings-on of that narrow and obscure little world.

Indeed, they both felt now that death was mercy. Sin had ruined his soul for ever in this world—and had he been permitted to return to them, it might only have been to witness the gradual dissolution of a frame preyed on by the most incurable of all diseases, remorse. A good husband and father had he been for many many years; and the widow and the daughter dared humbly to hope, that, as he had died in the religion that promises remission of sins, he might not be excluded, guilty as he had been, from the kingdom of Heaven. Had they thought that the prayers of the living would change the doom of the dead, they would, indeed, have worn the floor with their knees; but, in spite of all those natural emotions that have made such a belief holy in other religions, they knew that the decree had gone forth—and, from the pages of the Bible,

they only ventured to draw a firm trust, that he was among the number of sinners that were saved.

This affliction served too to remove from poor Margaret's mind the image of Harry Needham. That bright dream had been short indeed—and now it appeared dim in the distance. Sometimes he seemed to be sitting by her side—and his loud merry voice startled her in the stillness of the room, when nothing was said at their work. But the soul loses hold of the objects of its delight, and would in vain cling to unfading love, when the beloved is dead and gone. She thought then of Laurence, without the friend who as he said swung in the hammock next to his own;—and all sadder remembrances faded away, as she hoped that her brother would soon return. Her heart was formed for affection. All that she had given to her father now sought her mother's pillow—and almost all that her drowned lover had inspired, now followed her brother over the distant seas. To deaden the feelings of a heart—so young—so pure—so unselfish—and so pious, was not in the power of any thing but death.

In little more than a month after their return, it happened, too, that they received a visit from one whose visits were, indeed, always a blessing to the poor. Miss Wedderburne was young—not much above twenty—but, although not averse to the innocent amusements and gaieties of youth, and well qualified to grace and adorn all parties, of which these were the occasion, she had thought on the mournful spirit of human life, and

how she might best relieve some of its secret miseries. She looked not on the population of her native city, as upon beings alien to her—but often observed, as it passed by, the countenance that bore marks of something deeper than mere common anxieties, and found out the gloomy places to which the eye, dull or red with weeping, retired at night after long hours of toil. She knew that it was in her power to relieve, at least, much temporal distress, and that charity, even in its lowest sense, is the most Christian of virtues. If a family wanted bread, or salt, she could often procure it for them—and she knew that a very little added to the earnings of industry, would often change penury into comfort. She flew not upon wings to the dwellings of the poor—for she was no angel—but she walked quietly on feet—for she was a woman, with a heart true to the virtues of her sex. On a bed of down, she forgot not those who lay upon straw—the glare of light in her own opulent house blinded not the eye of her mind to the glimmer of the hovel-hearth—and while she enjoyed, with gratitude, all the comforts which affluence gave her, she remembered that there were such things as cold, hunger, and thirst, in this world. Therefore, this young and lovely gentlewoman was not an utter stranger to the hidden tenements of the poor, huddled together in the obscurity of a large town. Her charities were not ostentatious—they were little talked of in drawing-rooms and saloons, although, perhaps, they sometimes received,

what seemed there to be their due, a sneer—but her name was a spell in many miserable places—her face gladdened the sickly child, even in its cradle—at her voice the din and anger of the wretched often ceased—and her alms, given in the spirit of knowledge and love and religion, were truly a boon of charity, and therefore they were blessed.

Nor, in giving sustenance to the bodies of the poor, did she forget their souls. But she had learned to say her prayers by her mother's knees, surrounded with plenty and with peace; the daily bread she asked from God had been laid before her at all times, and never had been wanting; her heart had been taught to feel for others, but as yet had suffered few severe afflictions of its own; that heart she might know in its simplicity, in its happiness, and in its untried virtue, but all this, she was well aware, entitled her not to judge the life of others, to whom God had given a far other doom. Ignorance she pitied rather than condemned; vice, to which her pure nature, fortified by religion, and fostered in peace, had always been a stranger, did not separate from her sympathy the erring children of men; of temptations which she had never been called upon to withstand, she acknowledged the power when she saw others giving way; and feeling that the Christian religion was addressed to beings liable to sin, she learnt from it to believe that sin abounded, and therefore did not retreat in horror or disgust from iniquities that steeped the bread of the poor in something bitterer than their

tears. By the New Testament she tried herself, and felt that she was in too many things wanting; by the same Book she tried others too; and when she beheld vice, error, or guilt, then with humility and compassion she knew the awful meaning of those words, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Miss Wedderburne, therefore, sought not to make converts to any peculiar creed, till she had first made converts from sin, and it was not till she had lent her aid to put a fire on the hearth, and a meal upon the table, that she spoke of those sentiments that would make the light of the one cheerful, and the taste of the other sweet. The spirit of religion was, in her opinion, gradually to rise out of the spirit of humanity; and till the father and mother of a family attended to their household cares, and wished that their children should be clothed and fed, she feared that religious advice and conversation might be thrown away. She used no words unintelligible to uninstructed minds; enforced no doctrine or points of faith till she saw hearts willing to receive the spirit of Christianity; and even then, remembered that the New Testament was for all the human race, and that she, in her own ignorance, which she knew to be great, was not to lay down imperatively the laws of Christ. She went not into hovels to harangue, but to leave behind her such charity as might benefit both body and soul; remembering that we have all one common human heart, and

that no thought or feeling true to nature, and expressed meekly and earnestly, is likely to be often repeated without finding its way sooner or later into almost any bosom. She thus never left the poor and ignorant and vicious, perplexed, confounded, and irritated by words they could not understand, or of which they were unwilling to admit the painful truth; but if at one visit she did but a little, at another she hoped to do more, and to accomplish at last a slow but a sure reformation.

It may easily be supposed what a blessing at such a time as this was a visit from such a person to the family of the Lyndsays. At her very first entrance, they knew her to be a friend. No airs of condescension, no pride of superior knowledge, no consciousness of alms-giving were with Miss Wedderburne. She stepped like a lady as she was across the threshold—saluted Alice and Margaret as if they were her equals—and so they most assuredly were—and then sat down without intrusion by their fire-side. The old clergyman of the parish had told her their story, so there was no need of any painful conversation. She offered, at any time they chanced to need such assistance, to lend them money,—and said with a smile, that, at all events, she would be a good customer to the blind basket-maker. She saw at once that Mrs Lyndsay was a woman of intelligence and amiable character. A few words can tell that to the ear of one like Miss

Wedderburne. As to Margaret, even this young lady, who was familiar with the fairest beauties of her native land, could not help being startled at the appearance of such a being in such a dwelling. But the same good sense and fine feeling that made her speak with respect to the mother, prompted her to speak with nothing more than kindness to the daughter. She did not look surprised to see loveliness in a low station; she did not praise it as many might have done; nor, indeed, did she long think of it, when she saw Margaret moving about the room, at her mother's bidding, with such ordered and staid steps, and heard her answers to any questions so full of sense, and simplicity, and unembarrassed modesty. Never before had she been so deeply interested in the welfare of any two human beings so little known to her; and, after sitting an hour, during which time blind Esther, who had been visiting a school-girl, came smiling in unled, and, when told there was a lady in the room, dropt a curtsey towards her, as if she had her sight, Miss Wedderburne rose and shook hands with them all, and then benignantly saying that she would be not an unfrequent visitor, took her departure.

That day was the beginning of a new life to them all. They felt their hearts cheered and strengthened by being admitted into communion with one so manifestly good. Margaret's heart yearned towards her with a delightful feeling of admiration, love, gratitude, and reverence. Esther said she would know that

voice again, if she was not to hear it for years to come; and the widow thought that if she were to be called away, here is one who will be a friend to my orphans —God bless her and hers for ever!

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER year came round, and it was ushered in by the dwellers in this lane with the usual homely rejoicings. A livelier stir was among their dark rooms for a day or two, and merriment more eager from the severe and often desponding toil with which it was, for a short term, contrasted. Some families made it a truly happy festival, in which one spirit of disencumbered gladness prevailed, from the old man in his elbow chair to the very child in the cradle. Too many, perhaps, gave way, in their idleness, to vulgar and even vicious indulgences, aggravating the evils of poverty, which they were vainly seeking to assuage; while no doubt others, too dispirited by the pressure of want or sickness to admit jollity within their doors, gave a hasty welcome to the New-year which to them was the commencement of another twelve-months weary labour, and felt that they could afford no more to a foolish festival. Nor were there wanting many who sickened at the very sound of the annual gaieties—those who since that last celebration had lost perhaps

their all—the employment by which they had lived, or the parents or children, without whom life was now but a burden. Still the spirit of joy was prevalent over the city. On the whole, there was happiness; and dull or dim faces kept out of the way; so that almost all who were visible at windows, at their doors, or upon the streets, wore the looks of contentment and satisfaction.

The Lyndsays did not shut their door against the glee that was laughing in the lane. "I wish you a happy New-year," was, indeed, a salutation which could not send its cheerfulness far into the heart of the widow. Scenes were yet present before her eyes little indeed akin to mirth,—and the loud laughter that rung around was hard to be borne when she thought of that room in the Laigh-Wynd, and the burial-ground of Glasgow Cathedral. But she had strength of heart to return courteous greetings to all her neighbours; and then going into the room where she slept, she closed the shutters, and lay down for an hour on her bed, shedding floods of tears for the sake of her dead Walter. Margaret's mind yielded to the cheerfulness about her; and she dressed herself in her best attire to attend a tea-party with her friend Mary Mitchell. Esther sang several songs to the neighbours as they came dropping in, and who said, they thought they were entitled to ask that favour on a New-year's day; while poor Marion, with a new gaudy ribband round her waist, seemed happy as a May-

day queen; and but for the sudden and causeless coming and going of her wayward smiles, would not have appeared to be in any thing different from other human beings. All days in the year were alike to her; but she saw that there was something happy—she knew not what—and repeated the customary words she heard around, sometimes carelessly, as if they meant nothing, and sometimes with a momentary earnestness as if her spirit, darkened as it was, caught a glimpse of the light of humanity, and saw something more distinctly in the appearances of this mortal life.

The poor people who inhabited this lane did right to make the most of their annual festivities, for it was to be a long time before such merriment was again to sound between its narrow walls. The Typhus Fever had been showing itself here and there throughout the winter, and it now took possession of these old wooden tenements—creeping on, week after week, from one dark dwelling to another, till at last the long steep lane held more than a hundred sick, and life was gasping with difficulty on a multitude of beds. For some time, it was known that the fever was somewhere in the lane; but few seemed to know in what house. But soon the young girls that were wont to go tripping down to the well, morning and evening, were not so frequent, and elderly persons took their place. Within a month after the first rumour of disease, every third or fourth house had its patients, and several small funerals had left the lane. The careless passenger, hur-

rying along on his own business down this thoroughfare between street and street, knew not that the dying and the dead were on both sides, and that he was surrounded by the close air of contagion.

Mrs Lyndsay was now a good deal broken down; and her mind took the alarm, when she found that the fever was below and around her house. She thought at first of leaving the lane altogether, but she had no means; and, besides, what house in city or country is safe from the visit she feared? For herself she had no apprehensions; but should Margaret be taken ill, what would become of them all? Her terrors were too painful to be hidden from Margaret, and she was not found wanting in cheering and consoling trust. Her health was at that time better than it had ever been, and the friendship of Miss Wedderburne had lifted her up even above herself, and made her look on existence with less trepidation than she had for a while been able to do after her father's death. Her soul threw off every shadow of selfish fear, nor did she, on her own account, lose one hour's sleep, when she knew that the fever was coming towards them down the lane. She saw now so distinctly that her mother's very life, and that of her poor sisters, depended upon her exertions; that, instead of trembling for her own sake, she felt, in the generous expansion of her loving heart, that she was perfectly safe. No retired hut, in a garden of its own, far away in the country by a river side, would have seemed a safer place for her than this airless and

crowded lane, where infection had penetrated through the timbers of all the overhanging buildings. But she felt that her services might be needed night and day, and her pure soul was ready to watch by the sick-bed. She had no reason to think, even for a moment, that their house would escape; and several times, during every day, she went into some silent corner, and fortified her heart with prayer.

The scholars, of course, all staid away, for the school-room would have been a den of infection. One day the thoughtful little family were all sitting together at their work, when Esther laid aside some straw she had been plaiting, and said, "I am weary, weary, and must lie down." She spoke somewhat sadly, and could not help giving a deep sigh. Her mother and Margaret took her to bed, and she lay down without speaking, as if something sorrowful were passing within her soul. "Esther, my bairn, you are not very ill surely —I wish you would speak." Esther said with a low trembling voice, "It's the fever,—and I fear, I fear, that I am gaun to be ta'en away." Tears followed these words, and another long melancholy sigh. Margaret kissed her cheek, and applied her very softest tenderest voice to the poor child's ear; but her soul was disquieted within her, and would not be comforted. The fear of death was upon her; and innocent as she was, and incapable of harming any thing of God's creation, yet she had always seemed to think with quaking awe of the world to come. Visions, or

sounds, or inconceivable thoughts, had visited her in her blindness from the region of sleep, and now the harmless being trembled as if she had been a great sinner.

The slow fire that had been kindled in her veins was not to be extinguished, and it continued to burn on, day after day, as if smothered and kept down, but not like a dying flame. Weakness, weariness, depression, and anxiety preyed upon the poor victim with visible ravages, and every morning the daylight showed a face touched anew by the fingers of death. Moanings came from her continually, and her mind wandered,—not as such an innocent mind might have been thought to wander in delirium, but through ghastly and hideous places, that gave utterance to miserable words. Her mother was often unable to sit by her bed-side, when such terrible thoughts were heard piercing her Esther's soul; but Margaret, strong in youth, stood the trial, and sat till sleep, or some other unknown mystery, set free her sister's brain from the phantoms. There was no want of medical advice. All that human skill could do was done; but the fever lurked in the strong-holds of life, and by no power was to be expelled. Three weeks thus wore away—and if Esther was like death, sometimes lying without motion on her bed, so was Margaret, moving about continually with her sweet face now like ashes, and her limbs weakened by want of rest. Her mother did all she could—but that was little,—for she was not able, with-

out assistance, to rise from her bed, and sometimes even from her chair. On Margaret depended every thing—but at last an old neighbour, who cared nothing for infection, came in to assist her, and sat up with her, night about, with the afflicted child.

But, alas! the widow had now her own patient with her in the other room, for Marion also took the fever, and with her it was more rapidly mortal. A few days' sickness were all that the innocent had to suffer. Her few thoughts were locked up, and she never spoke after the third day of the fever, except about an hour before she died. She then opened her eyes; and her soul, as if cleared from the mists that for years had bewildered it, uttered some intelligible expressions of love towards her mother. Her face had a less vacant look, and her eyes remained fixed upon those of her mother, instead of glancing away suddenly, as they had been long used to do. "Naething sae sweet as the sound o' Psalms in the kirk on the Sabbath-day—O! mother, naething sae sweet! God must love the sound of our Esther's singing—I think I hear't the noo. They say angels sing." These were her last words; and her mother thought that God had sent back reason to her soul, at the very moment that he was taking it up to Heaven.

While Marion lived, her mother felt towards her a love deeper than even she could herself know; but when her little bosom ceased to move, all was hushed in that mother's heart. The death of so utterly helpless

a being was wept over by natural tears; but it could not, on her own account, be lamented. As long as her pulse beat, her mother had watched her as if upon her life her own had hung; and many, indeed, were the recollections of bypast things gathered round that helpless head; but when her Maker took to himself the soul which, in his inscrutable wisdom, he had darkened during its short sojourn on earth, a melancholy mystery seemed at an end—and one all unfit for this life had been mercifully removed. She had been happy in her mild derangement; so tenderly treated that no hardship had reached her; no bodily miseries had ever painfully perplexed and confounded her stricken soul; but her imperfect speech had often been about birds and flowers in their beauty, and the little she did know was all of kindness and love. Therefore her mother and Margaret both stood looking calmly upon her face—now pleasing and intelligent in death, as if she had enjoyed perfect reason; while her smile, that in life had been so wavering and inconstant, was immoveable now, and liable to no change but that of fast approaching decay.

In such extreme affliction, the presence of Miss Wedderburne would, indeed, have been an unspeakable blessing; but she could not, consistently with her most sacred duties, visit her poor friends during the prevalence of an infectious malady. She had at home two young sisters of her own, not so old as Esther and Marion, and she did not think that she ought to en-

danger them, by attending at such sick-beds. Her mother, too, laid a positive prohibition upon her; and, therefore, she informed the Lyndsays, that she could not see them in their distress. But she sent them wine, food, and money, and medical attendance—and lost no opportunity of conveying to them proofs of her unabated affection and regard. Her virtues were not founded in prudence, but they were guarded and guided by it; she saw distinctly the marks which conscience set on the scale of duty; and as far as blind mortals can act in the light of their imperfect wisdom, she never sacrificed to generous impulses that higher good, whose knowledge is a product of the thoughtful heart. All that Christian charity could give to the Lyndsays she gave, except her presence; and glad were both the widow and Margaret, that their benefactress was not exposed to death in their dwelling. They knew her motives, and felt that in this, as in every thing else, her conduct was wise and pious. What misery would have been added to all they now suffered, had infection been carried from their house into that of her who was their best earthly friend? And if it had sent to the grave those two beautiful children, whom, sometimes, she had brought with her to the lane—the pensive Harriet, with the dark eyes and raven locks, and Frances, the fairy, with golden hair, and eyes so light blue in the lustre of their perpetual smiles!

But although Miss Wedderburne visited not the

house, yet she seemed to be often present in Esther's delirious dreams. "O, kind lady! do you come to comfort the poor blind lassie on her death-bed! Keep hold o' my hands, that they may not tear me frae you. Hear how the great serpent is hissing—the dragon who devours the soul!" Her mother and Margaret took her hands, as the child wished, for they hoped that the touch might change the horror of her dreams. They also repeated to each other the name of her whom Esther was dreaming of, that it might reach her spirit through her unsleeping ear, and make her think that her guardian angel was by her bed-side. Love, and grief, and pity, made both these simple creatures, Alice and Margaret, skilful in ministering to a mind diseased. They watched and followed every changing mood of Esther's mind, which they had long known so well; and none but themselves could have been able to relieve, as they often did, the agitations that disease was exciting in that soul, which, when the body was in health, lay serene in its beauty and its happiness, like some small secluded glen, where a rivulet murmurs on clear in all weathers—where, sometimes, up springs the lark with a song, and on whose gentle braes are lying, in the sunshine, a little peaceful flock.

"Look, mother—the expression of her face is quite changed all at once—far happier; you need not fear to look on it now!" Alice gazed upon her child, and two or three big tears fell upon her face. Esther put up her hand and wiped them away. "Is that you,

Margaret, weeping for me? Dry up your tears, and weep no more. For I have awaked frae a fearsome dream. How is Marion?"—"Our Marion is with the Lord," said Alice with a calm voice. "And I, mother, may this night be with her in Heaven! Is the Lady near me? or was she but in a dream?"—They tried to hush Esther's voice—for they both feared that, in her extreme weakness, such an effort was dangerous. "O Death! where is thy sting?—O Grave! where is thy victory?"—said the blind child with her usual clear and silver voice, that sounded for a moment strong, as if she had been about to sing a hymn. Her eyelids had all along been shut—and they never opened more; her pale lips remained just as they were while she was speaking—and not even a sigh was heard when her pure spirit took its flight to Heaven!

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARGARET and her mother had now lived nearly two months alone; and they had become reconciled to the silence of their new condition. The stool on which Esther used to sit, and her own little round oak-table, on which her hands so readily found the lightest straw as she was industriously pursuing her ingenious work, were not removed into the other room, but stood as before, and were often looked at as something sacred belonging to the beloved dead. The few articles of her workmanship, some of them unfinished, were laid aside in a place where nothing could injure them, not to be parted with, but kept during her mother's lifetime as precious memorials of one who had known but little sorrow and no sin. It was sad to miss her voice that sung so sweetly to the passing hours—to hear no more her soft cautious footsteps stealing along the floor. That voice was already as the voice of other years—and those footsteps, deadened in memory by the weight of two months' solitary resignation, faintly sounded in the souls of the survivors, like something

long since heard in a dream. But, according as the too distinct images of sense faded away under the softening power of time, and relieved their hearts from too severe a pressure, did all purely spiritual remembrances deepen there, till her mother and sister came at last to see only their Esther's soul. Her name now gave no pang; it was pronounced by them both without faultering, but in a low and solemn voice; and always at that word a more serene stillness seemed to overspread the room, and a heavenly communion, as of mortal and immortal, to subsist between them and her who had gone to Heaven.

Nor was poor Marion forgotten. A thousand little tender cares and anxieties had daily watched that helpless creature, and never had she been allowed to disappear, for many minutes, from the sight of her mother or her sister. A familiar object at all times to their eyes, yet never had a profound interest left the inexpressive face of the innocent; and with incessant and yearning affection had they tended her whom God had sent so utterly weak into this world. If at any time sickness or pain afflicted her, how tenderly had they ever treated such a patient! Her soul, although darkened, was yet made of imperishable light. The poor creature could repeat her prayers, nor could it be known by others, what thoughts came wandering into her spirit, when she too knelt down, and folded her little harmless hands before God. Certain it was, that her nature was restored and revived dur-

ing her dying hours; and the intelligence that had revisited her countenance at last now enabled her mother and sister to accompany her in thought to heaven, and to see there, not only all tears wiped away from her eyes, but all darkness rolled off for ever from her immortal spirit.

It was thus, that, by the middle of May, perfect peace was in the widow's house. Laurence frequently wrote home, and always in affection, hope, and happiness. They who had been unfit for this world had been mercifully removed. Margaret, now a young woman in the perfection of her youth, and instructed by sorrow in the duties of life, had no gloom in her eyes but such as passed by like a cloud; and the widow herself, although she had buried much joy in the grave, had yet enough to bestow upon that sole survivor, and felt that round her were now entwined all the threads of love and of life.

The disease had now left the lane, and every thing went on as before. A good many scholars came back to school; but a few that had been among Margaret's chief favourites were to return no more. The hum of murmuring voices was again heard from morning till noon, and, by degrees, tones once familiar were forgotten. The happy children, although some of them had lost their sisters in that fever, danced and laughed and played as before; death might take them away into his dark chambers, but life kept joyful all that belonged to her; and the thoughtless creatures no more looked

sad, because their companions had been carried to the grave, than the flowers of the field pine away when feet have trampled down their sisters blooming by their sides on the same dewy turf.

Margaret Lyndsay had reached that time of life when the soul grows as much in one single year as during all its previous existence. Thoughts formerly dim or transient were now clear and permanent in her mind; many feelings about her own estate, and that of other human beings, crowded in upon her heart as if from a new-opened source; things that formerly passed before her eyes unobserved or not understood, now were seen to be manifestations of good or of evil, misery or happiness; the chances and changes that had diversified her own humble lot were now beheld by her at work all around; the future, although it lay before her shut up in darkness, was often pierced by the involuntary power of her soul; and feeling that a destiny yet unknown lay upon her, that might be severe, she thought of herself and her condition often with a solemn awe that never dashed her fortitude, but that tamed her smiles, and gave to a countenance, naturally bright and cheerful, a permanent expression, almost of sadness, which it was impossible to behold without emotion in one so very young and so very beautiful.

At such a period of life, the friendship of Miss Wedderburne assisted the benign and gracious power of Nature. Her refined manners were insensibly imi-

tated by Margaret, whose own character was so susceptible of elegance; her elevated sentiments found in the pure heart of the orphan a soil where they at once took root and grew; and the delightful sense of self-worthiness that was thus inspired by an equal communion with one whom she thought so far superior to herself, not only in rank, but in knowledge and in virtue, expanded all the faculties of her being, and made the humble creature rejoice in a meek and unpresumptuous confidence. Above all the other kindnesses of Miss Wedderburne, in Margaret's heart, was her kindness to her poor mother, who was always perfectly happy for several days after a visit from their benefactress. Nothing delighted her daughter so much as to see honour done to her mother's character. Well did she know its sorely-tried and unfailing excellence, supported by faith; and while Miss Wedderburne sat speaking to her parent, Margaret would be mute, listening to instruction that came with double force from the lips of that enlightened lady, as yet unafflicted, but the friend of affliction, and from the lips of a poor widow that had drank deep of the cup of grief, but had found at the bottom not bitter dregs, but the pure waters of comfort and peace.

But the visits of Miss Wedderburne did not turn away the hearts of the widow and her daughter from their lowly neighbours. During all the infectious sickness that had at last thinned the house, those neighbours had been found wanting in none of those

duties which human beings owe one another, more especially at such times. Many of them, too, had experienced the kindness of this same lady, or of her friends, in the same afflictions; and in the evenings when one or two of those humble folk came to sit for an hour by the ingle, they often spoke of Miss Wedderburne, and of the loveliness which a charitable life gave to the fairest lady. The friendship of such a being was too great and deep a blessing to awaken pride. The gratitude it inspired went into the depth of the heart; and, when Alice and Margaret thought within themselves what would have become of them but for her, they felt no inclination to elevate themselves above the poorest of the poor, but to fall down upon their knees before Him who had sent one to comfort them in their distress, to support their bodies with needful food, and to cheer their spirits within them by the beauty of holiness.

Margaret had another friend, one in the same rank of life with herself, whose cold and heartless conduct towards her at this time gave her affectionate heart much pain—that was Mary Mitchell. During the time the fever was in the house, Margaret thought little of her absence, although she wondered that no inquiries ever came from her through the neighbours; but now that the lane was safe, it seemed cruel in her never to call upon her friend after such great loss. It happened that Margaret was taking a walk by herself, one quiet evening, in the Meadows, when she met

Mary Mitchell, and in the impulse of her warm heart, she cordially took her by the hand, and with a half upbraiding smile, asked why old friends should be forgotten? After some intermission, Mary seemed glad to see her, and they walked along as they used to do in other days. But Mary soon became cold and reserved, and would not speak freely either about herself or her former friend. Margaret soon saw and felt that there was a change in her heart; and that change gave her pain, for she had loved Mary well, and had bestowed upon one who had not much that was amiable about her but good-humour, a free share of the affection that was overflowing in her young, innocent, and happy heart. To lose the kindness of a human being, and one of her own age and condition, was so painful to Margaret Lyndsay, that the tears trickled down her cheek. As she was going to say something tender to Mary, if possible to rekindle old affections, a young gentleman met them, and familiarly shook hands with her companion, whose face blushed with pleasure and confusion. He was evidently much above their condition, and spoke to Mary with an air of confidence and condescension. In a few minutes he went away, and the two girls sitting down on a bench together, Margaret ventured to say, that such as they were ought not, on any account, to have such acquaintance. Mary seemed displeased and irritated, and said that she was old enough to take care of herself, and wanted no advice. Free as Margaret was in her nature

from all suspicion, she knew in sadness that Mary Mitchell was now a lost girl. Her dress—her air—her speech—her countenance, all had undergone a sort of change. That careless and cheerful laughter was gone, and something evidently lay upon her mind that damped her spirits. Margaret knew at once that her companion, with whom she had spent so many innocent hours, had fallen either into gross imprudence, or into guilt; and she boldly said, taking her kindly by the hand, "Mary, Mary, O be warned by me, and never speak to that person more. If you do, you will be ruined for ever, and all your family brought to sorrow and disgrace."—"Margaret Lyndsay, I wish you would look after your own doings, and let me alone to judge for myself. I never went a-sailing in boats with a sweetheart on a Sabbath-day. You have as much reason to repent as I have." This was a cruel blow to Margaret's heart, and her hand, that held Mary's, insensibly let go its hold. Never could she think of Harry Needham without tears; and now the very hour of his death was brought back before her—the rush of the waters—and her own often repented sin. Her heart began to sob as it would break, and it was some time before she could speak. "Aye, aye, Mary! I behaved ill, indeed, on that unhappy day, and if I were to live till I was ninety years old, never, never, could I forget it, nor cease to acknowledge my great guilt."—"Then why attack me, when you are sae much waur yoursel? I never was the cause o' ony

ane that liked me being drowned."—"No, Mary, you never were. But you know that I had a long and dangerous fever after the death of Harry Needham, and that I repented my guilt often on my knees to God, when you yourself were in the room, only our two selves, and then you wept for me. Oh! why this cruel charge? Both my little sisters, too, you ken, are dead; and, wae's me, my mother is no strong. Will you be friends with me again, Mary? and if ever I give you advice again, it will be in a better spirit, and you will not be angry with me any more." Had Mary Mitchell been but on the verge of guilt, her heart could not have withstood this appeal, for it was not destitute of kind affections. But her innocence and her virtue were gone; and she felt abased before the purity of Margaret Lyndsay. She, therefore, in self-defence, cherished anger in her heart, and would not be appeased. She had also thought that Margaret's beauty had been observed with too admiring eyes by her seducer, and sudden jealousy had entered into her unconfiding bosom. Now there was an opportunity of quarrelling with Margaret for ever, and in the selfishness of fearful and suspicious vice, she again addressed the weeping girl. "Many a sair heart you made, Miss Lyndsay, that Sabbath your English lover was drowned. He had a father and a mother, and he used to tell us himsel', four sisters. What could ye hae said, or how would you hae looked, had ye been present amang them a' when the letter was opened, telling them

that he had been drowned?" Margaret sat gasping for breath. "I would have wished to die, as I do now; for, if it were not for my mother's sake, I would like to die, and to be buried down at Leith yonder beside my Harry. Too true it is, that I was the cause of his death. I had persuaded myself that I was not, but I know now that I was; but, Oh! Mary, Mary, I am mair an object o' pity than o' blame, especially from a friend and a lassie o' my ain age like you." Margaret now felt something coming to her relief—partly conscience—partly the power of innocence—partly the holy anger of nature which was thus unjustly smote within her sanctuary, and which at first thrown down, rose up now in her own vindication. "Mary Mitchell, we are both sinners, and as such we will both be called before the judgment-seat of the great God. If we are to be friends no more, will you kiss me before we part?" —"I hae nae ill-will at you; but there is nae need o' that. We're no likely to meet again, for I live noo on the ither side o' the town. I wish you weel—gude day to you. It's very true, we hae a' our faults, and I hae nae wish to be better than my neebours." With these words, Mary Mitchell walked away, and left Margaret sitting by herself in tears below the shadows of the elm-trees. For a while her heart communed with itself, and was soon restored to peace. She knew herself to be free from all vicious thoughts, and disposed, in the strength of Christianity, to discharge whatever duties God might lay upon her in her humble lot.—

She then thought of Miss Wedderburne, and wiping away her tears, her face was soon restored to its former sweet tranquillity, for her heart was calmed, and the Orphan entered with a smile into the Widow's house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARGARET had hoped that, as the summer advanced, her mother's spirits, which had been much depressed of late, would rise to their former quiet level; but in this hope she was sorely disappointed. The soul of the widow seemed to have lost its tone irrecoverably; and there was something sadder than resignation now breathed over her whole demeanour. A letter came from Laurence, telling how he had been engaged in the desperate cutting out of a brig from below a battery, and had been put upon the list of midshipmen. His mother read it with tears of joy, but immediately after relapsed into her deepest melancholy. Not even could the frequent visits of Miss Wedderburne bring a steady smile over her countenance. She often retired to her room, desiring Margaret not to disturb her for an hour or so; and, on coming back, she did not look like a person refreshed by sleep, but pale, languid, and exhausted. Sometimes she fixed her eyes for a long time together on Margaret, while her cheeks were thin and sunk, and she uttered not a

word. At midnight, when she thought her daughter was asleep, she sat frequently up in bed, and gave vent to long deep groans, praying, at the same time, for a speedy release to her sufferings, or greater fortitude to support them, till all was over. Every thing combined to convince Margaret that her mother thought herself in a dangerous way; and the poor girl knew well that no groundless fears ever entered so serene and resigned a heart. She began to fear that the last earthly calamity was about to befal her, and that her mother was soon going to join her husband and her children. Alice was, indeed, a dying woman.

Margaret also observed, that Miss Wedderburne had several times visited the house when she was out on some errand, contrary to her usual practice. After such visits, her mother, although seemingly composed, was always more mournful and melancholy, and once or twice wept as Margaret came into the room.

At last, one Sabbath evening, Margaret was desired by her mother to place chairs for the old clergyman and Miss Wedderburne, from whom she was expecting a visit. There was something more than commonly solemn in her voice; but that solemnity in no degree lessened its extreme tenderness towards her daughter. Margaret placed pillows behind her mother as she sate in the old arm-chair, and could not help thinking that her faded face seemed almost as near to death as the face of that venerable old woman, who had sat there palsied for several years, in the midst of

a family now nearly extinguished. "Thank you, Margaret—you have been a dutiful child all your days; they who behave best to their parents when living remember them longest when dead."

The old clergyman and that beautiful young lady now came in, and they all sat together almost mute. Alice was the first to speak. "Margaret, let not your heart be utterly cast down, when, before the two human beings we both most reverence, I tell thee, my child, that I have not many days to live. Nay, this very night may my soul be demanded of me." No one spoke. Margaret looked first on one and then on another—but both countenances were calm and fixed, and no hope was found in expression so full of the inward conviction of the soul. "For some months, Margaret, pain has been gnawing close upon my very heart. There, where your cheek in infancy often lay, has it pleased God to fasten the arrow of a slow death. I have been forced to speak at last. But no skill could have aided me. I thought that I had borne my Walter's death, like an imperfect Christian; but my heart has been sorely troubled—and its grief has rankled here, till I have been brought near to the hour when I am to be mercifully released!"

Now indeed Margaret knew why her mother had often sought to be alone, that she might wrestle with agony unseen by human eyes. Oh! thoughtless and unreflecting one—not to have suspected, long before, that some hidden trouble had seized her parent! But

now it was too late to upbraid herself—nor could she yet find voice to utter one single word, neither would a single tear fall from her eyes. She sat like one that has received the doom of death; and for a little space saw nothing in the room but moving and glimmering figures, although they who sat there were motionless, and neither foot nor hand nor head yet stirred at the ceasing of the widow's words.

The old man lifted up his withered hand and prayed. Margaret was somewhat revived by the weak tremulous voice that had for so many long years been employed in the service and the worship of God. But the words spake of death, and of a soul about to be released from its bonds in a prison of clay. They held out no hope, except the bright hope of eternal life. She looked at her mother, and her face was perfectly calm. Now and then her eyes were raised up to Heaven, and her pale, pale hands lifted devoutly upon her knees. Her lips moved in short whispered ejaculations; and when the prayer was done, she looked over to the old man with a smile, gently bowed her head, and said, "Thank you, Sir, for the great comfort you have given me!" The old man took Margaret by the hand, and laid one of his own upon her head, that was bowed down in affliction almost to the floor. "Fear not, my daughter, for yourself—my young friend here will take you to her own house; and repine not, that, after her mortal pains are over, your mother is about to enter into the

joy of the Lord."—"Oh! mother, have you no pain just now—have you no pain?"—"No, Margaret, I have no pain—and perhaps all my worst pangs are over." Margaret sank down quietly, and without any agitation, upon her knees; and, inspired with a holy fervour, poured out her soul audibly to God. Never had more tender beseechings reached Heaven, from earthly lips kindled by filial love. Miss Wedderburne knelt down also by her side—the old man wept almost his last tears—and the dying woman said, "Is this death?" It was not the evening of her last day—but she lay down to rise up no more; and before the next ringing of the Sabbath bells, Alice Lyndsay had happily breathed her last, free from all pain, even in the arms of her own Margaret.

And did Margaret Lyndsay wish to live another day, when she looked round the room, and felt in the dead silence that all the family but herself were now dust? "Oh! my dear Laurence! art thou yet alive?" "Fear not," said Miss Wedderburne, "both you and your brother will yet be happy. Are the decrees of God dreadful to bear, Margaret, or do you feel them all to be holy and just?"—"Poor worm that I am—shall I lift up my voice from the clay against my Maker? No, no. I am willing at this hour to render up my soul—I am willing to live on, if it should be in poverty, shame, and tears, till my pulse feels his decree." Her friend began to converse with her even beside the calm countenance of her dead mother; and Margaret,

supported by her enlightened piety, scarcely shed a tear. "Till within these three years or so, my mother told me herself, that no one had ever been so happy on this earth as she; and, since her troubles began, God did not desert her; and she was often—often perfectly blest. Now her pangs are over; and may I, may I believe that she is now an angel in Heaven?"—"Yes, Margaret, she is with her Saviour, and so is Esther—so is poor Marion, she who was a helpless one on earth, but is now more glorious in Heaven than the wisest of the living children of men."—"Oh! do you fear to mention my father's name? Must he be shut out from the gates of Heaven, when those he loved on earth are admitted into the Holy presence?" "The judgments of God are dark, and our eyes are feeble to read them; but what sayest thine own heart?" "That God has forgiven him!"

Margaret Lyndsay would not leave the lane till after her mother's funeral. The same worthy people who had formerly taken care of Esther and Marion, when her mother and she were at Glasgow, received her for a few days into their house, and saw all necessary preparations made for the interment. When all was over, the house empty, and no trace left on this earth of those who had so lately inhabited it, Margaret paid her farewell visit to all her neighbours, who gave her their blessing, many of them not without weeping, and she then went to live in the house of Miss Wedderburne.

CHAPTER XXV.

MARGARET LYNDSAY was now lifted out of the dim and obscure dwelling of poverty into a mansion rich in all the comforts and elegances of refined life. She was in a new world. Every thing was still, regular, orderly, and graceful in all the rooms. Intelligence and taste ruled over the character of the whole, alike visible on the walls, and the floors, and the furniture of the house. Poor Margaret was, indeed, a novice in all such things; but she felt the effect in her very heart of all that tranquil arrangement which as yet she did not understand, and a gentle wonder and surprise mixed with her gratitude, as she lay down to rest for the first night, beneath the roof of her benefactress, and in her own little bed-room, where every thing had been prepared for her under the direction of Miss Wedderburne herself. Nay, that benevolent lady came into her room, after she had lain down, and spoke cheerfully to the orphan. Soon all was silent; and the moonlight glimmered upon the floor of Margaret's room through the yellow curtains. God had

given her an asylum—and she vowed to show her gratitude by a life devoted to her duty, and, if possible, void of offence towards both her heavenly and her earthly protectors. She lay awake great part of the night—and thought, with almost unpainful tears, of those whom she had survived, and whom, notwithstanding her present lot, she almost wished to follow to the realms of peace. But although in her profound affection for the dead, she felt as if it would be a happy thing to join them in another world, yet there were feelings unwithered and unfaded in her young innocent heart that were to make this life pleasant and bright; and when towards the morning she fell asleep, it was with delightful anticipation of becoming the friend of the two beautiful children who were henceforth to be committed to her charge, and of doing all she could to keep them in the ways of innocence and peace.

In a few weeks Margaret Lyndsay was the delight of every one in the house. As for the two girls, Harriet and Frances, they danced around her during their play-hours in perpetual glee. Not one spark of love was dead in Margaret's bosom;—her tears had extinguished nothing—and her heart had the same power of affection as if it had never followed a funeral. Every evening and every morning she heard the girls say their prayers along with their sister. She always kissed them both before they rose up from their knees. What she could teach them was taught with a gentle

voice—and when she took them into the Meadows, whose walks she knew so well, the gladness and the beauty of the fair creatures completely occupied her soul, and chained it down from wandering too far off into the glooms and the griefs of the past. Sometimes she would think—"Oh! if my mother could look down from Heaven, and see how gracious the Almighty has been to me." And the belief that it might be even so often settled down upon her grateful heart.

Mrs Wedderburne, who had been several years a widow, was in delicate health, and required, every day, more and more of her daughter's attention. She was perfectly satisfied with Margaret's sweet disposition and virtuous principles; and although she had a good deal of family pride, which was not altogether unobservable in her manners, yet so much true benevolence shone over the fine features of her faded countenance, that the stateliness of her demeanour had even a charm, that the humble and meek orphan felt with a sort of reverent admiration. She was always dressed in widow's weeds, and with exactest care, as if it were due to her husband to wear, even with elegance, those garments, whose colour was never to be changed, till her sables were laid aside for a shroud. Margaret's mournful history was, of course, known to her, in all its particulars—and the grateful girl could not restrain her tears, when that face, which she had at first feared almost to look upon in its somewhat haughty aspect, smiled upon her with the utmost be-

nignity—and seemed to be almost as sweet as that of Miss Wedderburne.—"I give you the charge of my two children, Margaret,—and if they but resemble yourself, I shall be satisfied." To be loved and respected by such noble-minded persons as these made Margaret happy, although an orphan in the world—and seeing already the reward of good conduct, not only in comfort, competence, and peace, but in the love and approbation of the virtuous, she said to herself,—"As long as I am good, what have I to fear? My mother was happy on her death-bed, yet who ever suffered like her, both in body and in soul!"

Days, weeks, months, passed on—and now there was no eye that could have seen—no ear that could have heard, from Margaret Lyndsay's appearance or language, that she was the daughter of poor parents, and had lived, almost all her days, among the very humblest people. To be sure, her parents, although poor, had both possessed characters much above common. Walter Lyndsay had been a man of mind and of manners; and from her mother Margaret could have learned nothing that was not good in its meekness and simplicity. But now to the truth, and sincerity, and openness of her own natural demeanour, was added unconscious grace from the observance of those to whom grace was native. And over all was spread an air of humility, so opposite to that of humiliation, that betokened, at all times, a deep remembrance in the orphan's soul of the state from which she had been so benevolently

taken, of almost utter friendlessness and destitution, and, at the same time, a delighted gratitude towards her benefactors. She had no need to keep a guard upon herself, lest she should ever forget her situation. She could not forget it, as long as she saw the smiles of Harriet and Frances, and the approving looks of their mother and sister. To do her duty to them was enough to occupy her whole soul, sleeping and waking. Month after month, her grief for the dead became more like joy; and sometimes it was joy indeed, when, in the silence of night, she thought she heard Esther singing a hymn —and carried the imagined voice into her dreams of a family met together in Heaven.

Nor did Margaret Lyndsay forget her friends in the lane, and at Braehead. Nothing could ever obliterate from her heart one remembrance of the life she had past in both; and if prayers could have brought back father, and mother, and sisters from the grave, happy would she have yet been to have left her present benefactors, with a blessing, to have gone back into the utmost darkness and depths of poverty, and to have been a hard-working poor, unnoticed woman, all the years of her life. None of her former friends seemed to envy her happiness—for they saw her nature to be meek and lowly as before—and she had it now in her power to do them essential service. Miss Wedderburne's charities were not confined; and she often consulted Margaret about the most deserving and needy families. The windows of those two dim rooms

in the lane often brought the tears into the orphan's eyes, as she thought of other days so full of joy and of grief;—and sometimes, when the present was insufficient to satisfy the love of her soul, that yearned for closer communion with the dear beings of past times, she would go by herself into the wide burial-ground of the Grey-Friars Church, and sit down, for an hour, by her mother's grave,—a green mound, with two lesser heaps close to it—and all three, like many hundred others in that ample cemetery, without a memorial-stone,—which is often felt, in the silent oblivion of time, to be needless alike for rich and poor.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The increasing infirmities of her mother, who was seldom able to leave her own room till the afternoon, now kept Miss Wedderburne almost constantly occupied in the discharge of her filial duties, so that Harriet and Frances were left to the sole management of Margaret Lyndsay. Miss Wedderburne often contrasted in her own mind that tranquil and happy attention which she was now paying her parent, with the anxious and agonizing solicitude which Margaret had been called upon to suffer on the same account in such very opposite circumstances. Here, all kinds of comfort, every soothing indulgence which sickness required, silence, warmth, fresh air, noiseless sleep at all hours, when its influence might steal upon the patient, were possessed by her mother. And if such were the benefits which wealth conferred on the sick, corresponding ones were enjoyed by herself watching by the sick-bed. How different had been the lot of poor Alice Lyndsay—how different the trials of Margaret! There the soul was left to its own solitary and

unsupported self—in thick and confined air—surrounded often by din and tumult—the cares of the living interfering often with those of the dying—and the approach of death seen distinctly nearer and nearer every day, with nothing to veil the terrors of his countenance. To her who had gone through such trials, and came out of them resigned and happy, Miss Wedderburne now looked up in inward humility of spirit; and, while she still admitted those distinctions of rank by which the orphan was in one sense greatly her inferior, the very feeling of that accidental inferiority served only to heighten the delight in her intrinsic worth, and to impart to the sisterly affection she felt towards Margaret an endearing character of protecting tenderness and pity.

Harriet and Frances Wedderburne had hitherto received only the heartfelt instructions of a home education. All their natural feelings had been fostered by assiduous culture. Nothing selfish had been suffered to grow up in their nature; and they were strong, glad, and free in pity, charity, gentleness, and love. Their minds kept pace with their hearts, the one becoming unconsciously wise, as the other were consciously pure. So their manners were gay and graceful—their talk always about happy things—and their thoughts and feelings the same, except the just perceptible and uniting difference caused by the small difference of age. From these beautiful and happy creatures Margaret Lyndsay learnt much, while she was their

teacher; and her understanding quickly expanded with her increasing knowledge, as she read with them the books of history, the tales real or imaginary of human life, and the writings of divine-minded men, judiciously selected by Miss Wedderburne or her wise advisers. The inoffensive simplicities of her speech, and all the more marked peculiarities of her dialect, were soon rejected by her fine and delicate ear, when she heard nothing similar to them; so that, in a few months, Margaret Lyndsay, the Governess, could be distinguished from those present of higher birth, even by the best instructed eye, only by an apparel somewhat simpler, and a demeanour in its unobtrusive gentleness, bordering on timidity, but perfectly free from awkwardness or restraint.

Miss Wedderburne was, with all her noble acquirements, also what is called an accomplished woman—a linguist, a painter, and a musician. She had taught her young sisters something of other languages than their own, and the elements of these Arts. Margaret Lyndsay, although she had seldom sung when Esther was alive—for no voice could compete with that of the blind child—knew well all Scotland's melodies, and she soon acquired some knowledge of music. With quick perceptions, and now in the ripened powers of womanhood, she joined Harriet and Frances in those of their tasks over which she was not yet able to preside; and long within the year, she was fit to teach what she almost intuitively had learned. Af-

ter she had made some progress, her advances were rapid; and the Orphan Girl, brought in poverty and destitution from that miserable lane, was now in all things a gentlewoman, and worthy to sit in any parlour or saloon in the land. There may be something in birth; but hers had not been mean, either by the father or mother's side. The Lyndsays, although now a faded, almost an extinguished family, had been highly respectable for many generations; and the Craigs had long been dwellers on the same soil, and in poverty and hardship had lived decently in their farmhouses, not poor either in intelligence or virtue. Margaret Lyndsay, therefore, though lowly, was respectably born; and in her appeared what, with due culture, was the native character of the race.

Margaret had led this happy and useful life for upwards of a year and a half, when Richard Wedderburne, who had been finishing his education at a German university, returned home. His arrival diffused a new character over all the house. His mother's health seemed to revive in the presence of her son; and the habits of retirement which had so long prevailed in the family, in some measure gave way before the wide friendships which subsisted between the Wedderburnes and the first people both in city and country. In consequence of this, Margaret lived more than ever secluded with her young charge; and when she was present in company, sat silent and retired, with that fine feeling of her situation in the family

which marked her behaviour alike in the small fireside circle, and in assemblages of ceremony or state. Her meek and mild beauty could not pass unobserved and unadmired upon any occasion; but she was linked in happy and humble love with her two dear girls, and was with them almost from morning to night in their own cheerful school-room. For some weeks Richard Wedderburne merely looked at her as a lovely and unassuming girl, who was faithful to her trust—and no more; and he saw her come and go, without taking any farther notice of her, than what kindness and courtesy dictated to one who was a perfect gentleman. As for Margaret Lyndsay, she regarded him as the head of the house—as her young master—the brother of her benefactress, and of the children she so dearly loved. His manners towards her she felt to be such as she would have expected from the son of such a lady; and not a little pride touched her heart, when he expressed himself delighted with the progress his little sisters had made, and said, "But Georgina has told me the character and history of Miss Lyndsay—and I believe that, under her care, they will be as good as they are graceful."

Richard Wedderburne was an accomplished young man, and fond of society, of which he was the ornament and delight. But after so long an absence from his home, in a foreign country, and in the dull routine of a college, his heart lay in domestic enjoyments, and

he became more and more attached to his own library, and the evening drawing-room, when none were present but his mother and elder sister—or, occasionally, Margaret and her pupils. He had heard the story of the Orphan with an interest which could not but be gradually deepened by such knowledge as those hours gave him of her pure, simple, and grateful character. He had such pride as became the heir of an ancient and distinguished family; and therefore he was entitled to look upon Margaret Lyndsay as a dependent on the kindness of his mother and sister. This he did without the slightest derogation from the admirable qualities of her character; and thus, for a considerable time, he was prevented from admitting into his heart one single feeling beyond that of mere human kindness towards the beautiful Orphan. But her sweet voice—although seldom heard—and then only when she was addressed—yet found its way day by day farther into his heart. The soft and humble expression of those large downcast hazel eyes, lifted up in beaming tenderness towards his young sisters, sometimes came upon him in his solitude; and that lovely figure, moving in and out of the room on such quiet steps, sometimes like a light and sometimes like a shadow, he was willing to confess to himself was one of the most naturally elegant he had ever seen, and nothing less than wonderful in one so humbly bred and born. Still he was not in love; but certainly he loved Margaret Lyndsay—and that was more

fatal to such a deep-feeling, strong-thinking youth as Richard Wedderburne. As yet it was kindness—gentleness—pity—respect—admiration; but her voice, her smile, her face, her eyes, her person, were ever before him—and he had not been two months in his mother's house, till Margaret Lyndsay was dearer to him than life itself, and the object of a disturbed and engrossing passion.

Richard Wedderburne was a young man of an ambitious mind, and he was entitled to be so. Well-born, highly-connected, with a finished education, rich, and possessing great talents, he was justified in looking forwards to the highest civil offices in the country. He knew the hopes his mother, his sister, and all his friends, had formed of his career in life. And shall he marry an obscure Orphan—the child of a mechanic—one who so lately had lived the life of a pauper, among paupers? The thought was repelled instantly from his soul. But in the evening, Margaret Lyndsay was again before him in the "dim parlour twilight"—or in the room with his little sisters—when he went, not altogether for their sakes, to look at their drawings, or hear a song. To all other temptations he was superior, in the delicacy of his feeling and the strength of his understanding. But this overcame him wholly—his senses and his soul alike; and he often wished, in anger and agony, that he had not returned to Scotland—for he felt that his happiness was lost for ever, and that this poor Orphan Girl was more de-

lightful to him than all his proudest—highest—most splendid hopes in this life, now seemingly vain, idle, and worthless to his impassioned and enamoured spirit.

Meanwhile Margaret Lyndsay was perfectly happy in her quiet life. She was contented to sit whole days with Harriet and Frances, or to walk out with them in the sweet spring days, and enjoy the sunshine of this beautiful world. She was almost as much a child as themselves, when out of the rooms where their lessons were learned; and, having no disturbing hopes or wishes—no longing anxieties about the joys or griefs of future life, but a perfect reliance on the goodness of her Maker, and a delighted gratitude towards those whose house was in her case an orphan-asylum, she saw nothing around or near her but what smiled on the pleasant surface of existence, and never for a moment suspected that she was herself the disturber of a noble heart even to madness, and in the passionate thoughts of that mind considered to be one who might either be for ever the bliss or the bane of his whole mortal life. She had been taken from sorrow, want, and almost despair, and made happy at last by those whose goodness would not suffer misery to live before it; so how could she ever dream that one like herself, rescued from death by the hand of charity, could become so dear to any human being, especially to one raised above her to such an infinite height, as to make him hang upon her love for ever-

lasting enjoyment or everlasting despair! So she smiled as before in her serene beauty, and now Richard Wedderburne felt that Margaret Lyndsay must be his wife, or that he was lost for ever.

He knew well that such an event as his marriage with this friendless orphan would be little less than a death-blow to his mother. As to the opinion of the world, that was a mere nothing now to him, proud as he was; for to yield up his love to it, would be to make a sacrifice even of his own soul. Therefore, after a long and desperate internal struggle, he determined to make an avowal of his affection to Margaret, and to get her to swear to marry him, upon his mother's death. That word sent a shudder to her heart; but he knew himself too well to suffer it long to distract him; for if Margaret loved him, and promised to be his wife some day, however distant, that was enough to raise him from misery to bliss, and might his beloved and honoured parent live to the last and most extreme period of human life. Neither was he presumptuous in his superior rank or the consciousness of his own worth and endowments. But still he could scarcely doubt that Margaret, an orphan, and attached to no one else, would be brought to love him, and seal her faith by an oath, which would leave his soul tranquil and confiding in the future. His purpose was fixed, and no time was to be lost in putting it into execution.

His sister had gone out to pay a visit with the young girls, and his mother was in her bed-room. So he went

in, with an agitated heart, to the little parlour where Margaret was sitting, with two or three drawings of Harriet and Frances on the table before her, and preparing them for frames which she herself had gilded. He took her hand with vehement passion, and a few hurried words were enough to carry surprise, fear, and astonishment to the soul of the trembling Orphan. She sat speechless and thunder-struck, unable to believe what she heard, yet unable to think that this could be a mere mockery of her who was so dependent and defenceless. Richard Wedderburne poured out his whole soul into ears now able to hear distinctly what he uttered; and then said,—"Margaret, will you swear it—will you swear it?—If so, God will reward you;—if not, I am doomed to perpetual despair."

The heart of Margaret Lyndsay was wholly free from the slightest touch of passion towards him who now so earnestly pleaded. In her prayers she had joined his name along with those of all them she so gratefully and tenderly loved. She had looked up to him as a being almost of a superior order—so mild—so courteous—so brilliant—so wise—so noble, and so good. Was all this that she heard possible in nature? And did such a man so love her as to prefer her to all the world, and stake his whole happiness on a few words from her lips? It was an incomprehensible thought; and therefore she was calm in the presence of his perturbation, and dared at last to lift up her voice.

"I was brought into this house a dejected, forlorn, and almost heart-broken orphan by your sister, and, Sir, your mother has, indeed, treated me like her own child. I am ready to die for their sakes, or for yours; but, so help me God let me not bring misery into their hearts; for what atonement could I now make for such sin? Oh! have other thoughts of me, for I am altogether unworthy of your love. Go, go, and I will leave the house for ever. Go, I beseech you upon my knees!" Richard Wedderburne started up, and, afraid to agitate her farther, raised her tenderly from the ground, kissed her forehead, and hurried out of the room.

In one hour, all life was changed to Margaret Lyndsay. Nothing so wild and confounding had ever smote her soul in a dream. A confused sense of guilt and ingratitude dashed all her thoughts—and to have heard such words seemed of itself a crime. The wife of the only son of her benefactress!—The sister of Miss Wedderburne, and of Harriet and Frances!—To swear upon the Bible to deceive them all! To live as a base, artful, selfish, and designing hypocrite, in their presence, even when eating their bread, and looking on their smiles, and going along with them on Sabbath to church; and all this in return for being rescued from want and ruin, and cherished almost in their very bosoms! "No—no," fervently exclaimed the orphan in a deep low voice, "rather would I die, and lay my head

down beside my mother, and Esther, and Marion, than wickedly bring misery, wrath, dissension, and shame, into this house—sacred to me, in my happiness, or in my wretchedness—now, and for ever more."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALTHOUGH Margaret Lyndsay was not one of those young persons, whose nervous sensibility is so tender, that any strong emotion seems to render them in a great measure irrational, and wholly incapable for a season of performing any of their duties; yet this sudden declaration of love from one to whom she had always looked up from the most respectful distance, so shook her very frame, that for several days she was confined to her bed or to her room. Miss Wedderburne was unceasing in her affectionate tendance; and wholly unaware of the true nature of her patient's illness, frequently mentioned her brother's name in the course of conversation, and said how truly concerned he was for Margaret's indisposition. The poor girl was glad to hide her face in the dimness of the room, and felt sometimes as if it were burning with the blushes, or chilled with the paleness, of conscious guilt. She frequently heard, too, the footsteps of Richard Wedderburne in the house, and they seemed to her hurried and irregular; and more than once his

voice was close to the door of the room, making anxious inquiries about her from his sister. All this was calculated but to aggravate the fever of disquietude in her veins; and for about a day her illness assumed a very serious appearance. But, by strong efforts, she succeeded in tranquillizing her mind; and then the frame gradually recovered its strength, till again she was able to be with Frances and Harriet in their little beautiful boudoir.

She had, however, been altogether unable to bring her mind to any resolution how to act in her perilous situation. She saw what her duty was, and she was determined to do it; for her conscience was strong and clear in its purity, and not to be blinded or deceived. Never could she be the wife of Richard Wedderburne; and therefore it was necessary that she should inform those of the proposal he had made, from whom gratitude, as well as conscience, imperatively required she should hide nothing that so deeply affected their happiness. But how could she do this, with delicacy to his feelings who had preferred her, as he said, to the whole world? She owed him every thing that was respectful and tender—every thing that could be made consistent, any how, with her plain and obvious duty to his mother and his sister; and therefore how could she, a poor friendless orphan, dare to open her lips, and say that such a man loved her and desired to make her his wife? She felt that, in making such a declaration, it would be thought that she

was uttering an incredible and monstrous falsehood—so humble was she of herself, with all her goodness and beauty, and so little aware of the power which they possessed, in their fair union, over any human heart. Her perplexity, therefore, was great—she knew not what to do—and wished that she could be carried away of a sudden out of the house, and disappear into some distant obscurity.

Several days passed over in this kind of distraction; and Margaret, afraid almost to meet the eyes of Miss Wedderburne and her mother, had a good excuse, in her great bodily weakness, for keeping almost entirely with her pupils, or in her own bed-room. Her lover behaved to her with the finest feelings, absenting himself much from the house, and manifestly restraining in his manner every thing like the strong expression of a tender attachment. But poor Margaret trembled every time he came into the room; and although her heart was entirely free from all passionate emotion towards him, yet she experienced what a strong power over the female heart there is in the idea of an exclusive preference—and she thought, with many lonely sighs, how happy indeed some woman, of equal rank in life with himself, would one day be as his wife, when she and his transient love for her were both forgotten.

Richard Wedderburne perceived that an internal struggle was constantly agitating her, and he was in strong hopes that love would arise in his favour, powerful enough to shake her fortitude, and bring

her at last to yield up her heart and her will to his sway. He knew her history, and that she could have no other attachment; and, therefore, he felt, without weak or vain presumption, that he would probably win her deepest and tenderest affections. Margaret had begun to hope that he saw every thing in the same light that she did, and that he would soon get the better of so ill-placed a passion; but the heart of a strong-natured man will not, when touched at the core, so easily turn away from the object of its desire, nor sink before a dubious repulse. Accordingly, he soon contrived to find Margaret alone, and renewed his suit, at first with an overflow of the most winning and subduing kindness, and afterwards when he beheld the Orphan not unmoved, but resolute, with a desperate vehemence of passion, that overcame her at once with fear and pity, and, but for the power of her noble purpose, would also have overcome her with love.

"I beseech you to consider who I am, Sir. Little more than a year ago, I was living a poor girl in a miserable lane, upon bread and water, or potatoes—coarsely clad—and lying down at night on a chaff-bed. My friends were people in the lowest ranks of life—and, God knows, I had no reason to think myself, in any way, their superiors. Your sister's instructions may have improved me since then—but think on what I am telling you, and you will be ashamed to love such a one as me. Think on me, an ordinary girl, in low life, going to the well for water, along with poor

servant girls, as I did every day—and you, Mr Wedderburne, will feel at once what a degradation it would be to love such a person."—"You slept on a chaff-bed—you say so, Margaret.—God bless your fair bosom for ever.—Listen to me—say that you will be my wife—and you shall be cherished for ever in a bed of down—and love will watch over you all your life long—and I will devote all my life to make you happy." To one so enthusiastic, in his deep and strong passion, as Richard Wedderburne, Margaret had touched upon topics that only served to render her more irresistibly dear; and, proud as he was, he boldly looked all the circumstances she had alluded to in the face, and felt the utter feebleness of the distinctions of rank, when brought to oppose or withstand the great power of Nature. "Swear to marry me, Margaret, and let the time be as remote as you choose"—and, snatching up the Bible from the table, he seized her hand, and pressed it lovingly down upon the open pages. Margaret shuddered at the violence of the action and the words, and firmly rescuing her hand from his grasp, said, with a deep low voice,—"That she would take no oath,—for to become his wife was impossible."

When Richard Wedderburne was at last forced to know that Margaret would not make the promise which he endeavoured, with all the power of his spirit, to extort from her when under her strong emotion, he strove next to gain her acquiescence to a proposal, which was virtually an equivalent. "If you will not

say that you will become my wife, say that you will remain in our house, as you now are, on condition of my never again speaking to you on the subject." Affected deeply by his love and his entreaties, Margaret could not find in her heart to declare, that she must leave the house for ever; and she now, by her silence, seemed, with the tears trickling down her cheeks, to say that it should be as he desired. Her melancholy smile expressed a wish that happiness and peace and tranquillity might not be destroyed by an incident that must be driven out of mind, and never again even alluded to by a single look. Her lover availed himself of the pause in her resolution, pressed her fervently to his bosom, and swearing never to speak to her again about love, left the room, with a face, however, evidently glowing with a soul-felt satisfaction, and almost with triumph.

Margaret was now plunged into utter misery. She soon saw clearly that she stood unintentionally pledged to her lover almost the same as if she had given him a promise. And did she not begin to feel how dear to her he was becoming, or at least soon might become, if once she delivered up her heart and imagination to the dawning dream of love? "Oh!" thought she to herself, "that such might be my destiny, that his mother and sister might be brought to think of me as his wife, and then, then indeed, might I be the happiest of all living creatures!" But a dead, heavy, icy weight of conviction, pressing upon her inmost heart, told her

that such a thought was, indeed, the extreme of self-deluding folly; and that the rising emotions of nature within her soul were beginning to blind her to the fatal truth. For who was she—the orphan child of a miserable mechanic, who had died in want, sin, and shame—that now presumed to think of the time when her head might lie on the same pillow with that of Richard Wedderburne? All dim thoughts of such happiness soon passed away from her heart; and she knew, that, ere long, she must face a very different life. Nor did that ultimate and unvarying conviction greatly distress, though it could not but depress her; for conscience, a sense of duty, moral feeling unwarped, and integrity subsisting entire in a humble and pure nature, all combined to enable her to make the sacrifice, if not with ease, at least without anguish; and when finally she implored, upon her knees, protection from God, wherever his Providence might conduct her, something remained within her soul, after all its dreadful conflicts, calm, clear, confident, and triumphant, that assured her she had been true and faithful to his holy law. In that delightful feeling her heart was now proof against all the severest temptations nature could bring against her; and she even looked forward with a calm and deep satisfaction to whatever new, and, as yet, unimagined trials might be yet awaiting her, an orphan, on the rougher and darker paths of life.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

INSPIRED with such thoughts, Margaret Lyndsay, after a few days farther conflict, wrote a long letter to Miss Wedderburne, telling her all that had occurred, and offering to leave the house immediately, and to hide herself any where she would propose, till her brother had forgot such a person, and taken one worthy of him to be his wife. She heard Miss Wedderburne's voice in the drawing-room—so she went into her friend's own parlour, and laid the sealed letter down upon her writing-desk in such a manner, that it could not, for a moment, escape observation. This done, she felt perfect peace of mind, as far as she herself was concerned, and sat down in her own quiet bed-room, with wet eyes,—but, as she thought, almost, in some degree, happy.

She had not remained there many minutes ruminating on her condition, when she heard the door of the drawing-room open and shut; and Miss Wedderburne and her mother came into her little apartment. Both their faces were grave, and to Margaret's alarmed ima-

gination, they also seemed clouded with upbraiding displeasure. The truth was, that the eye of a mother had, for some time past, discerned something unhappy and distracted in her son's mind, formerly so cheerful and elate; and combining one thing, however trifling, with another, she was convinced that an attachment, perhaps an avowed one, subsisted between him and Margaret Lyndsay. She had, that very day, questioned him about it—and he having a soul above deception, told, with delicacy, nearly the whole truth. All he said was to the honour of Margaret; but the very idea of such a connection was so great a shock to the whole soul of that excellent but proud woman, that it was not in her power to prevent unkind and angry feelings from rising up towards the Orphan—and in an extreme selfishness, which appeared to her pure reason, and indisputable propriety, or even virtue, she would, in that state of mind, have allowed Margaret to die, rather than that her son should make her his wife, even if her death had been to destroy his happiness for ever.

Pale, speechless, and trembling, Margaret durst not lift her eyes from the floor—for she felt that the altered countenance of both her guardians were upon hers, and that she was in their sight a detected culprit. "I did not expect this from you, Margaret Lyndsay.—Sincere I always thought you—and I deserved sincerity at your hands.—Did I not?" Margaret gasped for utterance—but not one single word could escape her

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALTHOUGH Margaret Lyndsay was not one of those young persons, whose nervous sensibility is so tender, that any strong emotion seems to render them in a great measure irrational, and wholly incapable for a season of performing any of their duties; yet this sudden declaration of love from one to whom she had always looked up from the most respectful distance, so shook her very frame, that for several days she was confined to her bed or to her room. Miss Wedderburne was unceasing in her affectionate tendance; and wholly unaware of the true nature of her patient's illness, frequently mentioned her brother's name in the course of conversation, and said how truly concerned he was for Margaret's indisposition. The poor girl was glad to hide her face in the dimness of the room, and felt sometimes as if it were burning with the blushes, or chilled with the paleness, of conscious guilt. She frequently heard, too, the footsteps of Richard Wedderburne in the house, and they seemed to her hurried and irregular; and more than once his

go—show me the hovel or the cell wherein to conceal myself, and there will I joyfully lie down in dust and ashes, in rags and beggary. Almost from beggary, and from much sorrow, did you, my beloved Miss Wedderburne, rescue me—and to want and wretchedness will I now return, rather than cause any grief to those whom I love next to them who have gone to Heaven!"

Miss Wedderburne had hitherto sat silent. She now looked to her mother, and said, "Did not I know her truly,—and is she not the same noble creature we always thought? But I should use other and better words. Margaret, you are wise and strong in all true knowledge,—and from you, I, at least, have much to learn. Be comforted,—we must part for a while,—but all may be for the best,—and although I must never call you sister, yet you are so in my heart, as I hope I shall always be in yours. Look cheerful, Margaret,—and mother, you surely will not frown upon her any more?" Margaret smiled from the soul, and said with an unfaultering voice, "Since I am not despised or condemned as one that is guilty, I am perfectly happy, and hope to retrieve any error I have fallen into, by adhering steadily to any line of conduct Mrs Wedderburne will point out."

All displeasure, confusion, and fear, were now at an end; and, perhaps, Mrs Wedderburne, kind-hearted, humane, and pious as she was, felt something stronger than regret, almost remorse itself, when she saw the

innocent orphan drying up all her tears, and heard her calling down the blessing of God upon her head, wholly forgetful of the unjust and injurious harshness to which, in her helplessness, she had now been subjected. Then, too, Margaret, who had been too much stunned with the unexpected severity and acrimony of Mrs Wedderburne's reproof, to be able to mention the letter she had written, and who had, indeed, almost forgotten it, respectfully whispered to Miss Wedderburne that she would find it in her parlour. When it was read aloud to her mother, Margaret's vindication was complete, and the orphan shone before them more lovely than she had ever done before, in the pale beauty of her sorely-tried and unfailing virtue. No wonder, thought Miss Wedderburne, that my brother loves such a being,—but in the soul of the mother, the satisfaction, perhaps justifiable, but certainly too selfish, that her son was to be saved from an unequal marriage, prevented some of those kindly emotions towards the poor girl, which in different circumstances of trial would have arisen in her truly virtuous and enlightened mind.

The good old lady had now regained her composure and peace of mind, and began to feel more pity for the orphan. "You must forget Richard altogether, Margaret, and there is no fear but you will do so by and by. Let not this passion prey upon your heart to your unhappiness."—"Never, never, Madam, will I forget your son while I live. I esteem, I ho-

mour him; and as for the love he bears to me all unworthy, may it soon be changed into that friendship which I hope I may deserve. No passion preys on my heart. I would look with perfect joy on him and his wife walking together into this room, this very hour. I do not forget who and what I am.—I do not love your son,—believe me that I do not; for, had I done so, I must have forgotten all my past life,—my present duties, and thought not at all on the uncertain future that may be awaiting me;—my conscience tells me I have had far other thoughts, and I will leave this house in peace of mind, but, Oh, sure enough!—with a sad and a heavy heart, for never were there such friends as I have had. God bless you all for ever and ever." Miss Wedderburne wept upon her bosom; and the old lady herself was greatly affected. "Where must I go?" No one answered, and Margaret continued, "If no plan occurs to you, Madam, I will mention one—for I have for a fortnight past been thinking of little else. I have—at least I had two or three years ago—a grand-uncle living near the head of Clydesdale, in the parish where both my father and mother were born. No intercourse that ever I remember took place between him and them; but, if he is still alive, perhaps he will receive me into his house—if not, others may. The clergyman who married my parents is also alive; and my grandfather was a surgeon, well known and respected over all that part of the country—there must be some who will show kind-

ness to me on his account, and also on my gr
ther's. During the life of my parents, I never
of any body they did not think of—and I beli
were not on friendly terms with those I all
but, notwithstanding, I have no fears. I will g
and find a dwelling somewhere among honest
I will work for my bread, as I have often do
with letters from you in favour of my characte
will doubt that I am respectable. I am willin
to-morrow—I will go on foot—your son wil
come to know where I am till there is no long
of concealment—and there I may perhaps find
to live happily all my days!"

Margaret spoke with simplicity and fervou
whether her plan was judicious and reasonable
it at least seemed to be so to Mrs Wedderburne
son was now on a visit for a few days to a fri
Berwickshire, having gone away purposely til
garet should recover her tranquillity, and be
that she was in reality engaged to him for li
was therefore fixed that Margaret Lyndsay s
before his return, set out on her pilgrimage.

CHAPTER XXIX.

At sunrise, on a still Midsummer morning, Margaret Lyndsay left the house in which she had so long been happy; and as she gently shut the door behind her, she felt excluded from that kind and gracious guardianship of her forlorn and orphan estate. But no faults of her own had caused the loss; and her departure was not in anger, but in sorrow. Although forced to leave their roof, it was not in disgrace and desertion; and much as she had been before beloved and esteemed by her protectors, her character now appeared to them both in all its native nobleness and purity, and they resolved to reward her willing sacrifice by a life-long friendship. Prudence, propriety, and perhaps pride made it necessary, for the present, that Margaret should become a seeming outcast, and a wanderer on an uncertain pilgrimage. But more than good wishes went with her; for her friends made her perfectly independent of all charity; and she knew to whom to apply for advice and succour in any difficulties that might be met with on this adventurous com-

mencement of a new life. Therefore the you
grim, although sad, was neither downcast nor c
ed; the few tears that trickled down her che
not impair the cheerful expression of her b
she had dressed herself with her usual neatne
graceful simplicity as if going only to take a wa
the children she so dearly loved; but she was
the orphan child of poor and humble parents, so
taken her small bundle in her hand, and giving
hurried look to the windows of the room wher
riet and Frances were sleeping, she cheered up h
heart, and began her journey along the beautifu
walk of the Meadows, now hushed and fragra
fresh in the dewy dawn. The birds were rejoic
a low thick warble, and she, too, rejoiced; fo
was the strength of a soul void of offence to G
man, and happiness came suddenly upon he
drove out all anxiety and sorrow from her faire
som.

On reaching the end of the Walk, to her gla
prise, Miss Wedderburne stood before her with a
and said, "I must see you safe, at least half of
journey, my dear Margaret. Be happy!" But sh
the beaming face of the innocent creature, an
that she needed no encouragement. A chaise
standing near—they went into it—and in a few
nutes Edinburgh, and all its suburbs, were left o
sight.

Margaret, elated by the thoughtful affection of

friend, enjoyed the journey almost as much as if they had been wheeling away to some delightful residence in the country, where all was prepared for them, smiling faces, welcoming hands, and pleasant occupation. It was a strong, bright, bold sunshine, able to make barrenness beautiful, and all the common weeds by the way-side splendid as garden flowers. Miles were but minutes to the glad Orphan; and the hour came too soon, when, at a small way-side inn, about sixteen miles from Edinburgh, the chaise stopped, and she had to part with her protectress. "I will not detain you, Margaret. I shall be back to George's Square by ten o'clock. Go your ways, my dear friend, and God be with you. You will remember all that myself and my mother have said." They kissed each other—Margaret with a humble and grateful heart—a few tears were soon dried up—and the fearless girl pursued her solitary way along a wide moor.

It was one of the perfect days of July, when Nature is felt to be within the very heart of the year, and when there seems never to have been such a thing as winter or decay. The blue heavens were stedfast with their marbled clouds, and all the fair and gorgeous array of perishable vapours seemed then as if they were everlasting. A general murmur of bliss prevailed, and it accompanied the solitary girl, as she walked along the houseless moor. Every moment there was something that delighted her—the green lizard, as it glided through the rustling tall grass by

the way-side,—the lapwing, now less wily t
young were fledged, walking along the lea-fiel
its graceful crest,—the large yellow-circled g
bees, booming by in their joyful industry,—tl
gon-fly, with his shivering wings shooting in ec
flight, almost like a bird of prey,—the bleating o
on the sunny knowes—or the deep cooing of th
at-dove, somewhere afar off in his lonesome wc

"Will you remember a puir auld lame blind
By your footsteps I think you are a woman,
young ane." Looking up, Margaret saw a grey
ed man, with his hat in his hand, led by a litt
in a string. The thought of her brother and of
Harry Needham suddenly smote her heart. Th
the end of a sea life. "Yes, my poor old mar
is a shilling for you.—Is that enough?"—'
reward you, my bonny bairn. It will make m
py for several days. Aye—aye—God will r
you, sure eneuch. Is'e warrant you're a leddy t
a bit walk this fine warm morning. Perhaps my d
will lead me up the avenue, and I may fin' my
down to the kitchen, and get a drink o' beer. Y
there's nae satisfying beggar bodies. But w
unco wersh, and does na sloken weel, it's sae l
through this month;"—and so saying, the old
broken-down blind beggar laughed till his furr
face was bright. "I am no leddy, my honest fri
but there's another sixpence, and it will buy y
good draught of beer, and a bit cheese and b

likewise."—"Nae leddy, say you? I wush that I could just see for a single minute; to ken if you're no cheating me. Wud you like to hear a sang?"—Margaret said she had not time to wait—and the old man, making a bow, wished her a good husband, Pompey tugged at his string—and away hobbled the veteran on his wooden limb, singing like a tiger,

'Twas in the good ship Rover
I sail'd the world around,
And for three years and over
I ne'er touch'd British ground.

Margaret felt, as she looked behind, and saw the old sailor waving his hat in farewell, that happiness was a strange thing in this life. Why was she herself so happy? Father—mother—sisters—all dead—dead, too, Harry Needham—her brother, perhaps, never more to return,—herself forced to leave her home—and going, she knew not well whither, perhaps to meet rebuff and rebuke, and to be sent out of the door like an unauthorized intruder or an impostor. She knew all this—and, sitting down for a little while on the low turf-wall of a little enclosure in the moor, she tried to persuade herself that it was heartless to be happy—and that she ought to be sad and sorrowful in memory of the beloved dead. But conscience whispered away all such idle misgivings, and guarded her pure spiritual happiness. Not even could the remembrance of all the funerals she had seen prepar-

ed, one by one, within little more than a single year, distress her innocent soul. Her Bible, too, was in the bundle she carried in her hand. There, in the silence of that sweet solitary spot, she took it out, and read two or three chapters of the New Testament. As she again shut the clasps, and lifted up her eyes, how soothingly beautiful the green knolls, with their little groupes of lambs asleep or in play! And, as she looked to heaven, how steeped in mercy seemed the blue depths of the wide smiling sky! She rose with an expanding heart, and walked on along the dreary dusty road as if it had been the soft margin of a murmuring rivulet. "My uncle must be glad to see me—no fear of that,—Blood, as the good old homely proverb says, is warmer than water; and I will love him, be he what he may."

The high-ways are trodden by a perpetual pilgrimage. Margaret overtook an elderly woman who walked feebly, but at the same time with that quiet air of resolution that shows a deep purpose in the heart. They greeted each other; and that which was alone in the thoughts of the aged traveller soon came to utterance. "I'm gaun to see my son, Thomas, who has met wi' a sair accident in blasting a rock wi' gun-pouther. They are feared he'll lose his sight, and he's a' shattered baith in body and in limb. He's may-be dead, now that I'm telling you about him. If sae, it's a decree—and we maun a' submit." Margaret told something, too, of her story; and in

about half an hour they came to the cottage by the road-side where the wounded man was lying. "I'm frichted to gang in, lest Thomas be dead," said the mother. "I am getting sick." Margaret took her kindly by the arm, and went with her into the house, where she had the satisfaction to see a mother and a wife both perfectly happy. The poor man was in a fair way of recovery, and although his face was scorched, his eye-sight was not impaired. "Wull you stay and tak your dinner wi' us, Ma'am," said the gude-wife, "gin you can put up wi' sic like as we hae? for, although you be on your feet, wi' a bundle aneth your arm, I'm sair mista'en, gin you're no a leddy when you're at hame. I'm sure your father's at the least a minister."—This was twice Margaret had been taken for a "leddy" during her humble journey; and no wonder, for steps of more natural grace had never touched a Persian carpet on the floor of a rich man's house, nor had pearls ever adorned a brighter confusion of auburn hair, nor jewels ever sparkled above a forehead of purer snow. She took a drink of milk and a bit of oatmeal cake, with a smiling face, and wishing quick and complete recovery to the gudeman, left the hut, among many kind words, and pursued her journey.

She had passed, almost without observing it, the solitary village of Carnwath,—the cool placid afternoon was now pretty far advanced, and the scenery was every minute becoming more beautiful. A new coun-

ty was gradually opening upon her, and cultivation, wherever the ground admitted of it, was either complete or extending. Thick hedge-rows, with here and there a tall tree, groves, a gentleman's seat, farm-houses, with comfortable corn-stacks, made a pleasant contrast to the dull tracts Margaret Lyndsay had passed through; and she began to think that her uncle's dwelling must be a sweet one, if it were any where near the banks of the bonny burn that now came wimpling by, and conducted her through rich holms and meadows. "Come here, my lassie," cried a cheerful voice, "and gie us a' the news frae the East." A loud laugh succeeded; and Margaret saw, below the shadow of a huge plane-tree, a party of hay-makers, who were enjoying themselves after their day's work. They were only a few yards off the road; and she cheerfully entered the gate, and stood beside the party.

All noisy mirth ceased in a moment before the smile of the beautiful stranger. "Nae offence, Ma'am, I hope," said the same voice that called to her passing by,—"We're a' heartsome, but dinna want to be unceevil.—Will you sit down and rest you?" Margaret, remembering hay-time at Braehead, when she used, half in work, half in pastime, to join the merry band of rakers, sat down cheerfully on one of the wreathed roots of the old overshadowing tree, and taking the proffered milk-bowl into her hand, drank to all their healths, with a sweet smile, that made them at once her friends. Several maidens like herself were

resting on the grass—children—young men—and a patriarchal figure, with a head as white as snow. The weariness of a hot day's work was on the reclining groupe enlivened by the pleasant feeling that the sweet smelling meadow-hay was all put into little ricks, safe against change of weather, and that the following morn was Sabbath. The mirth and jests of the sunny working-hours were almost over, and the hearts of the labourers were beginning to turn towards home, and their lowly beds. At such a time, the spirit of a thoughtful humanity was easily awakened; and the old man respectfully and kindly said to Margaret—"You are a stranger, I think, in these parts.—The sun is fast westering.—Have you far to go?"—"I am going to Daniel Craig's, at Nether-Place.—How far am I from it?" The old man told her, "that Nether-Place was distant about three miles—and that she had only to follow the Burn. Ye'll come first to an auld tower, syne a bare-looking house, with a bit bourtree-bush; and then, about a mile ayont, is Nether-Place, a' covered wi' trees, where you'll hear the sound of a thousand craws, for the branches are black wi' their nests. But, do you ken Daniel Craig?—Excuse me for asking; but he's an auld man like mysel', and does na see very many company."—"My mother was his niece, and I am going, for the first time in my life, to pay him a visit." The old man rose up from the grass, and going up to Margaret, took her by the hand, and affectionately said, "Your name will be

Lyndsay? Aye, aye, you're Alice Craig's ain bairn. God bless ye, my bonny lassie. Out o' sight, out o' mind, is a sad, but a true saying, in this warld. Are your parents living or dead?"—"They are both dead—I am thus far on my way to see if my grand-uncle will acknowledge me."—"If he disna, I will," said the old man. "I was at the funerals baith o' Gilbert Craig and Adam Lyndsay—your grandfathers—about twenty years syne—and I ken the family-face weel—but not a single ane among a' the Craigs, or Lyndsays either, had ever so bonny a countenance as thy ain—and there's mony a ane in the parish will think the same. Daniel Craig is no a bad man—na, na,—but he's a kind o' miser—however, I manna wrang him—he'll no shut the door against you—there's no ane in the three parishes roun' that wud na open it to siccan a ane coming at the gloamin', and asking a lodging for the night." Margaret's heart was glad when she found herself unexpectedly in the midst of friends; and she willingly promised to pay a visit to the Haugh in a day or two, the name of the farm where her new found friend lived, and whose low thatched roof she saw about a quarter of a mile off up the burn, on the side of a brae that bounded the beautiful little prospect. "We'll likely see you, Miss Lyndsay, at the kirk the morn. Aye, weel I ken the pew where your mother sat, and a' her folk for many long years."—"Call me Margaret Lyndsay, when next we meet, for I like that name best, and it is most fitting for

me. Good night, and God be with you all." They all stood up, and uttered kind words at her departure.

"Her heart rejoiced in Nature's joy,"

as in the dewy stillness of evening she felt carried on along the soft green banks of the burn, by the pleasant continuance of the liquid murmur. The pure breath of the air coming down the vale met her face with a refreshing coolness, and the velvet herbage gave new elasticity to her wearied feet, that felt a sweet relief from the sultry dustiness of the hard highway. She soon passed by the little solitary Tower or Keep, and then the Hut, with its bourtree-bush. It seemed as if she had not walked above a few miles all the day long, and she cared not if Nether-Place were much more remote, and not to be reached before the set of sun. "About this time will my sweet Harriet and Frances be preparing for their beds, and I hope, yes, well I know, that at their prayers they will be sorry that they have lost Margaret Lyndsay." At that thought her eyes filled with tears; but now she heard, in the wide stillness of deepening twilight, the faint sound of the Rookery composing itself to rest, and in a few minutes was at Nether-Place.

With a beating heart, she stopt for a little while at the mouth of the avenue, or lane, that seemed to lead up to the house. It was much overgrown with grass, and there were but few marks of wheels; the hedges

on each side were thick and green, but unclipped, and with frequent gaps; something melancholy lay over all about; and the place had the air of being uninhabited. But still it was beautiful, for it was bathed in the dews of a rich midsummer gloaming, and the clover filled the air with fragrance that revived the heart of the solitary Orphan, as she stood, for a few minutes, irresolute and apprehensive of an unkind reception.

At last she found heart, and the door of the house being open, Margaret walked in, and stood on the floor of the wide low-roofed kitchen. An old man was sitting, as if half asleep, in a high-backed arm-chair, by the side of the chimney. Before she had time or courage to speak, her shadow fell upon his eyes, and he looked towards her with strong visible surprise, and, as she thought, with slight displeasure. "Ye hae got off your road, I'm thinking, young woman, what seek you here?" Margaret asked respectfully if she might sit down. "Aye, aye, ye may sit down, but we keep nae refreshment here—this is no a public-house. There's ane a mile west in the Clachan." The old man kept looking upon her, and with a countenance somewhat relaxed from its inhospitable austerity. Her appearance did not work as a charm or a spell, for she was no enchantress in a fairy tale; but the tone of her voice, so sweet and gentle, the serenity of her face, and the meekness of her manner, as she took her seat upon a stool not far from the

door, had an effect upon old Daniel Craig, and he bade her come forward, and take a chair "farther ben the house."

"I am an Orphan, and have perhaps but little claim upon you, but I have ventured to come here—my name is Margaret Lyndsay, and my mother's name was Alice Craig." The old man moved upon his chair, as if a blow had struck him, and looked long and earnestly into her face. Her features confirmed her words. Her countenance possessed that strong power over him that goes down mysteriously through the generations of perishable man, connecting love with likeness, so that the child in its cradle may be smiling almost with the self same expression that belonged to some one of its forefathers mouldered into ashes many hundred years ago. "Nae doubt, nae doubt, ye are the daughter o' Walter Lyndsay and Alice Craig. Never were twa faces mair unlike than theirs, yet yours is like them baith. Margaret—that is your name—I give you my blessing. Hae you walked far? Mysie's doun at the Rashy-riggs wi' milk to the calf, but will be in belyve. Come, my bonny bairn, take a shake o' your uncle's hand."

Margaret told, in a few words, the principal events of the last three years as far as she could, and the old man, to whom they had been almost all unknown, heard her story with attention, but said little or nothing. Meanwhile Mysie came in—an elderly, hard-featured woman, but with an expression of home-

ly kindness, that made her dark face not unpleasant. She was the only servant, and after the first surprise, did quietly what she was bid, and set out the evening meal. While Daniel Craig closed his eyes, and lifted up his hands to bless it, Margaret could not but think the grey-headed man, in spite of the character she had casually heard of him, must have a heart that might incline towards her, and she partook cheerfully of what was set before her, and with a good appetite after her long journey. When supper was over, Daniel told the servant, who had ate at the same board, to get ready the bed for the young woman,—"for my niece, Margaret Lyndsay." Mysie held up her hands with pleasure. "The dochter o' Elspy Craig, as I am a sinner! Fair fa' your bonny face—I'll mak the bed soft and sweet, if feathers and thyme sprigs will do't," and forthwith set about her business.

Margaret felt herself an inmate of her uncle's house, and her heart began already to warm towards the old grey-headed solitary man. His manner exhibited, as she thought, a mixture of curiosity and kindness; but she did not disturb his taciturnity, and only returned immediate and satisfactory answers to his few short and abrupt questions. He evidently was thinking over the particulars which she had given him of her life at Braehead, and in the lane; and she did not allow herself to fear, but that, in a day or two, if he permitted her to stay, she would be able to awaken in his heart

a natural interest in her behalf. Hope was a guest that never left her bosom—and she rejoiced when, on the return of the old domestic from the bed-room, her uncle requested her to read aloud a chapter of the Bible. She did so,—and the old man took the book out of her hand with evident satisfaction, and, fastening the clasp, laid it by in the little cupboard in the wall near his chair, and wished her good night.

Mysie conducted her into the bed-room, where every thing was neat, and superior, indeed, to the ordinary accommodation of a farm-house. "Ye need na fear, for feather-bed and sheets are a' as dry as last year's hay in the stack. I keep a' things in the house weel aired, for damp's a great disaster. But, for a' that, sleepin' breath has na been drawn in that bed these saxteen year!" Margaret thanked her for the trouble she had taken, and soon laid down her limbs in grateful rest. A thin calico curtain was before the low window; but the still serene radiance of a midsummer night glimmered on the floor. All was silent—and in a few minutes Margaret Lyndsay was asleep.

CHAPTER XXX.

The strong light of the rejoicing sun awok
garet from deep and dreamless sleep, and sh
a footstep now and then moving along the
floor of the kitchen, in the few necessary occu
of a Sabbath morning. She did not wait to be
—but soon left her bed-room, and walked out
the dews, now melting away on the ground an
She saw that Nether-Place was, indeed, a p
dwelling—and many of the tender and happy r
brances, which her heart still cherished, faithfu
sacredly, of sweet Braehead, now came upon
she looked up to the gorgeous grove of syca
that shadowed and sheltered the house. To h
prise and delight, she beheld the smooth waters
very burn she had walked along the evening
gliding by within a hundred yards—for they had
a sudden turn on meeting a line of low hillock
inclosed the farm-house in a kind of small,
and wooded peninsula. A bridge was seen be
large meadow-field—and, about a mile off, Ma

observed a spire, that arose from among a cluster of houses, on a hill-side. That she rightly conjectured to be the parish church and village of Casterton. A soft undulating line of green summits went along the horizon in their pastoral beauty; and, altogether, near and far, Margaret had never, in her small experience, beheld any scene so placid, so cheerful, and so seeming to be, in itself, a little secluded world. "Here," thought she, "may I live, if my uncle will permit me, away from the knowlege of all my friends in Edinburgh—and here can I give disturbance to none of their minds." All was still, except the rookery in the old elm-trees, that stood but the distance of a broomy field from the house; and that monotonous sound, to which the ear soon becomes accustomed, served but to deepen the silence of the Sabbath.

The old man seemed pleased to see that Margaret was an early riser, and spoke to her very kindly at their homely breakfast. His face, as well as that of his domestic, both wore a graver expression than on the evening before; and, in an hour or two, all three were ready to walk to church. They proceeded almost silently by a narrow footpath, through meadow, lea, hayfield, ploughland, coppice, and grove—and soon reached the place of worship. The congregation began to collect in the church-yard—some standing in little groupes, and others sitting down in the sunshine, upon the grave-stones, or the old mossy wall. The bell tinkled clear in the dry atmosphere, and its

sound brought together, in quickening motion, people appearing over the braes, and rising up from the hollows. A quiet animation prevailed—the salutations of courtesy partook of the spirit of religion; and the composed faces and voices of all spoke of that common sentiment by which we feel ourselves to be united, as brethren of mankind.

Sitting in that little kirk, surrounded on all sides with decent people, in the humbler ranks of life—and, here and there, in larger and more neatly furnished seats, with the families of the few neighbouring gentry, Margaret Lyndsay felt herself in a new situation of the deepest and most sacred interest; and, without any feeling of idle curiosity, she could not but look, with a calm delight, during Divine service, over the quiet and attentive congregation. In this very place had sat her humble forefathers; and the sainted spirit of her mother might be looking down upon her who was now brought by the changes of mortal life to the spot of her own nativity. With a grateful spirit, she joined in the "voice of Psalms, the simple song of praise,"—and, before service closed, felt herself to belong to the same parish with those whom she had joined so fervently in the worship of their Creator. Nor was she unobserved by the congregation—a new face, and one so beautiful, by the side of old Daniel Craig! Many wondered who she was; and perhaps a few, one or two elderly persons who chanced to look for a while on the features of the stranger, felt

her resemblance to some face or other nearly-forgotten, and knew her to be a blood relation to the old man by whose side she sat. On dismissal of the congregation, there was some whispering about the pretty maiden in Daniel's pew; and old Thomas Carstairs of the Haugh, who had spoken with her on the hay-field, had a secret to communicate, and soon spread from seat to seat the rumour that she was the grand-daughter, from Edinburgh, of a man whose name was yet kindly remembered in the parish—Adam Lyndsay. A few of the friends of that good and useful man went up to her in the church-yard, and introduced themselves to her, welcoming her to the parish, and hoping to see her with her uncle at their houses when it might be convenient. Margaret rejoiced to find herself quite among friends—a deep gratitude to the Giver of all Good took possession of her; and, on returning to Nether-Place, it had all the appearance of being her home. Nothing, to be sure, could be more different than it was from the house she had left only a single day ago; but then it resembled Braehead, and the glad soul of her very childhood awoke within her as she sat down on the old wooden chairs, and eyed the humble hearth. She had no repinings; but then she thought with tenderest gratitude on her benefactors, and blessed them in their own elegant mansion, and brought them before her affectionate heart in every hour of their separate employments. She felt assured, too, that they were thinking

of her; and hoped that one, who had unfort
thought of her too much, might soon bring h
to regard her only as a person worthy of his
and who had sought to deserve it by voluntaril
quishing, for his sake, the home where she had
been happy.

In the quiet of evening the old man took h
him along the burn-side, and into a green ewe-
where they sat down for a while in silence.
garet Lyndsay, your mother did not use me w
was her uncle—and yet, on her father's deat
never asked any kindness of me—and she n
without ever telling me of it. It is true, that her
and I were not living as brithers should—but
fault was that? as much his as mine. Don't
my bairn, these are auld stories—but I remember
as gin it was but yesterday." Margaret was weep
a strange dream of her mother's life, before she l
had been born. She remembered her mother's
about her uncle, and it seemed now as if some w
were done to the dead. "I tell you not to greet,
garet, your mother was a harmless creature;—ay
had a fine nature o' her ain; and I trust that
has taken her to his mercy. But why did neithe
nor her husband ever keep up ony acquaintanc
me? They never wrote me ae single word even wh
child was born to them, for they thought I was a
without a human heart; but they were sair mist
—and I will prove that they were, by being kin

their Orphan bairn." These words alluded to things of which Margaret, in the ignorance and simplicity of her childhood, had known nothing; but the tremulous voice and grey head of the old man, as he sat uncovered by her side in that quiet and lonely place, touched her heart with extreme tenderness to him, and she expressed her gratitude in a few words that went to her uncle's heart. "I have nae wife—nae children—nae friends, I may say, Margaret—nane that cares for me, but the servant in the house, an auld friendless body like mysel'; but if you choose to bide wi' us, you are mair than welcome, for I know not what is in that face o' thine; but this is the pleasantest day that has come to me these last thirty years."

Margaret was now requested to tell her uncle more about her parents and herself, and she complied with a full heart. She went back, with all the power of nature's eloquence, to the history of her young years at Brachead—recounted all her father's miseries—her mother's sorrows—and her own trials. All the while she spoke, the tears were streaming from her eyes, and her sweet bosom heaved with a crowd of heavy sighs. The old man sat silent; but more than once he sobbed, and passed his withered toil-worn hands across his forehead. "I was not to blame, Margaret. How was I to blame for not assisting you all in your poverty? I knew it not. Walter Lyndsay, your father, was a proud man. Not proud was your mother, Alice Craig, but a woman obeys her husband,

nae doubt; and therefore she lived and diec
verty, rather than tell her distress to her fath
ther. How then was I to blame?"—"My dea
we wanted nothing. Our afflictions were from
from disease, and frequent deaths. But we
happy—all, except my beloved father, and he
last with a smile upon his face, for I kissed
very moment he died, and he looked as if he
God had forgiven him. With them all now i
For myself, you have promised to allow me to
at Nether-Place; and I will work for my maint
for I never have been idle, and I can support r

They rose up together, as by mutual conse
returned to the house. Before the light had
died away, Daniel Craig asked Margaret to
chapter in the Bible, as she had done the night
and when she had concluded, he said, "I neve
the Scriptures so well read in all my days—di
Mysie?" The quiet creature looked on Margar
a smile of kindness and admiration, and sai
"she had never understood that chapter sae w
fore, although, aiblins, she had read it a hu
times."—"Ye can gang to your bed without
to show you the way to-night, my good niece—
one of the family now—and Nether-Place will
this be as cheerfu' a house as in a' the parish.
perhaps you'll tire o' us, Margaret, and wish yo
back at the town again, with these fine rich pe
Margaret seeing the old man in a happy mood, di

even vindicate her friends in Edinburgh from being only "fine rich people," but bade him good night, with a gentle familiarity; and again, upon her knees, returned thanks to God in her small bed-room, lighted only by the full risen moon, for having given her such a place of rest in her troubles.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Daniel Craig, the laird of Nether-Place, l
many years borne, in his native parish, one
most repulsive of all characters, that of a mise
as we judge of our fellow-creatures almost enti
their life and conduct, no doubt the old man co
complain of being so esteemed. He was, inc
miser; but not one whose heart and soul lay w
hoard alone, in selfish and solitary passion, con
with the fever by which it was agitated and dev
Too true it was that the beggar often went unr
from his door, and that he beheld frequent wa
distress among his neighbours around, which he
not to mitigate. Yet it was seldom that extre
age, or blindness, or decrepitude, or a wanderin
ther with a flock of starving children, in vain a
ed to his heart. Gruffly and capriciously he ga
alms; and always as if he parted painfully wi
own, so that often the very objects of his charity
his coin in their palm, could with difficulty ret
blessing, and in the next house joined the sneer ag

Daniel Craig the miser. He was in all things scrupulously just, and his word was as good as his bond, so that, living as he did among poor people, to whose comfort and happiness regularity in payments is of such vital importance, and who, if they get justice, will rarely need generosity, his character at times was regarded with respect, and whenever it happened to be the subject of conversation, after the ordinary spleen and spite had been vented against the close-fisted miser, something favourable always wound up the discourse, and it was admitted that the old man had his good qualities, notwithstanding all his avarice.

There were a good many farmers in the parish, who better knew Daniel's character, and the events by which it had been produced. A few of them felt much friendship and regard for him, not unmixed with tenderness and pity. He had been cruelly disappointed, after he had rather passed the prime of manhood, in the strongest passion of the human heart; and had seen the woman who had promised to be his wife married almost to his next-door neighbour. A sullen and brooding spirit then settled over his whole character; he secluded himself from life; and he who had formerly been a man of cheerful and social habits, now spoke to no one but upon bussines, and seldom left the boundaries of his farm. He assumed the dress and appearance of an ordinary labourer, and worked in his fields, like a slave of the soil, from earliest to latest twilight. Years passed by, and the children of the

woman who had deceived him grew up almost
his feet. To them Daniel was always kind, wh
chanced to come bird-nesting along his hec
to take a short cut to school through his farm
in general, he appeared to be what he was, a
thrope, and, in process of time, he became
doubt, a miser.

For a long time it had been generally thoug
the parish, that Daniel Craig would at last b
all his money to the family of the woman who
grievously injured him; but they all dropt aw
by one, in those natural diseases that insensibly
the countenances in the little country kirk, ar
the look of the very smallest congregation
every season of the year. So he lived apart in hi
working retirement; as time went on, there wer
and fewer who knew any thing of his history; t
cumstances which made him and his situation in
ing ceased to be remembered; and he sustain
ignominy of a character which was alien to his
nal nature, although induced upon it by the
tion of other strong disappointed passions, wh
him had been ardent and strong. Thus, having
sparingly—abstemiously—niggardly for nearly
years, and having, during all that time, water
furrows of his farm with the sweat of his brow
niel Craig was now rich, and had become the la
this beautiful little property, about a hundre

twenty acres of arable and meadow-land, on which he had been born the tenant's youngest son.

Such was the man in whose house Margaret Lyndsay had become an inmate. He felt that he had one foot in the grave, for he was upwards of threescore and ten; and all the strong affections of his nature, that had so long lain dormant, or yearned in solitary hopelessness towards beings long mouldered away into the dust, now rose up, not passionately and disturbedly, but with slow and steady and delightful movements, towards the beautiful Orphan, who seemed to have been sent by Heaven, like an angel, to comfort his latter days. Had he not also shut up his heart against her mild and innocent mother? But the old man wore not his heart away now with fruitless regret or remorse. Margaret became to him even as his own daughter; and he called her by that name, with a tenderness that surprised his own heart, in which he had not supposed such a capacity of love had yet remained inextinct. Margaret looked on the old, grey-headed, solitary man, with that pitiful affection which she was always ready to bestow on any one of God's creatures who seemed to require it; but here, too, there were many qualities of character daily revealed to her, in themselves most estimable; they two were also of the same blood; and sweetly blended with all those feelings, profoundest gratitude in the Orphan's heart, when she saw the roof of his house over her, a table spread and a bed prepared for her by one who bore the name

of miser, but who, in a few days, looked upon her as the greatest treasure he now possessed.

The heart of the old man, that had for many years been locked up almost in a frost, now thawed, and dissolved under the gracious warmth of affection. Had he striven to do so, he could not have resisted the power of Margaret's perpetual smiles; but, instead of that, he was never happy when she was out of the room. He had found suddenly, when no such hope could have been even dreamt of in sleep, a new object of natural delight to cheer his declining age. More beautiful was Margaret Lyndsay—more tender—more cheerfully sedate—more sincerely loving than even she had ever been, who had left his bosom in her falsehood, and carried over her faith to another husband. Age had stilled all that passion in his soul, age and the grave. But every man has within him the feelings of a father; and here was a daughter rising up before him, in his old age—a flower seen, for the first time, in its perfect beauty; and as he prayed devoutly to God, long to bloom unfading, when his grey hairs were still in the airless cell of death. This strong natural delight visiting him at last changed his whole character, or rather restored and revived it; so that, in a month or two, Daniel Craig was seen in neighbours' houses, on market days, and even at a fair, with a countenance almost as much enlivened with happiness as any other in the merry village.

It was not long before Margaret Lyndsay was

known, loved, and admired over the little parish. Remembrances of her parents—and also of her grandfather and grandmother, Mr and Mrs Adam Lyndsay, lingered in many houses, and made her at once a friend by their ingles. The novelty, too, and wonder of a niece of whom no one had known any thing, coming unexpectedly to the house of Daniel Craig, in his old age, and manifestly working such a change upon him, made quite a stir all around, which soon subsided into a general sentiment of regard with every one who had opportunities of seeing her beauty, sweetness, and worth. "Nae doubt," thought many, "he'll make her heir to every thing—nane better entitled—for nane leevin's sae sib to him. And Daniel Craig canna be worth less than thousands." This last consideration disposed the hearts of many to admire and respect her, who might otherwise have been slow to think much of any thing beyond their own fire-sides; and, without being the least aware of it, Margaret, who felt herself still a poor Orphan, was now looked upon, over all the parish, as a rich Heiress.

Daniel Craig had, within the few last years, let all his property of Nether-Place on a short lease, except a dozen acres. He needed rest in his old age—for few had worked so hard as he till so near the natural period of human life. Indolence had succeeded activity—and he had been in the custom of sitting greatest part of the day in his arm-chair, taking a walk down to the burn-side, or, in the evening, to the end of his ave-

nue that joined the high-road, to look, with a
less curiosity, but faint human interest, on tl
known and nameless travellers passing by on t
siness of life. Every thing immediatetly abo
ther-Place was therefore neglected, and left to
lent processes of Nature. The spot inclosed
garden, and which once had been a very be
one, was quite overgrown with grass; that wr
and smothered the gooseberry and currant-b
and reached up to the lower branches of the
trees, which, all unpruned as they were, still co
ed to brighten, with their purple or golden load,
autumn. The sun-dial now told only a few c
hours—for many branches had stretched ove
smooth grass-plat on which it had been placed
intercepted both light and shade from the moss-g
horologe.

Margaret Lyndsay ventured to propose tha
weeds should be killed in the garden—that the
bushes, that looked with a thousand bright and dewy
all over the solitary inclosure, should be laid open t
sun and the air. "As for the honeysuckles,
always take care of themselves, and clamber up to
light. My dear uncle, let us employ a man f
single day, and there will be a beautiful garden in
evening sun." A man was hired accordingly.
Daniel took off his coat, and showed that he co
handle a spade still—and Margaret and old My
lent their aid, with hoe and rake, on the scarce visi

walks that had once been gravelled—and that soon began again to appear in straight lines or circles, marking out where flower-beds and borders had flourished and faded in the Springs and Autumns of old. The good work, once begun, proceeded prosperously; and in a few weeks Nether-Place was as sweet and pretty as the honey-moon cottage of a young wedded pair, who desire in their love to be surrounded with beauty.

The cheerful, because busy, time of harvest was now at hand; and the fields, brown and yellow one morning, were seen on the next overrun by the jolly reapers, and on the day after covered with the tall and rich stooks, so pleasant a sight to the farmer's eye. Daniel Craig and his fair niece walked among the shearers—and in the joy of his heart, the old man again became one of the bandsters for a few hours every day, and stepped vigorously across the stubble. "Sawners Carson, dinna be surprised gin I take the land into my ain hands next Whitsuntide. I could stoiter at the plough-end yet; and though aiblins I might be oure sair forefeuchan wi' the seven year auld lying lea, I could gar the summer-fallow, or the stubble rigs, gang snoving aff frae the coulter like bits o' waves from a boatie's side." Sawners Carson, the tenant, said, with a good-natured laugh, "That he wud hae nae great objections, for though Nether-Place was gran' soil, the rent was far oure high, and that his landlord maun gi'e him down thretty per cent. Wull

ye speak a word for a puir body, Miss Lyndsay?" Old Daniel chuckled, and rubbed his elbow, for he thought of his half-year's rent, and the welcoming face of old Robert Carrick in that small dim cabin in his own Ship Bank, close to the Black Bull, Trongate, Glasgow.

So past the quiet lives of the family at Nether-Place; and, before winter set in, Margaret felt as domesticated there as if she had been an inmate from childhood. She occasionally let her friends in Edinburgh hear of her welfare and contentment; but Miss Wedderburne's letters, although full of affection, gave her much pain, for she was evidently unhappy about her brother, who had again gone abroad, and had expressed some intention of joining the army. Margaret could not but fear that she was the cause of his unhappiness; but destiny had placed an insuperable bar between them in this life; and knowing that, she did not allow herself to doubt that he would soon reconcile himself to his own lot, as she had done to hers, and at last be happy, useful, and estimable.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NETHER-PLACE was now a cheerful and well-furnished house, for its proprietor was said to have renewed his youth, and things gave him pleasure which had for many dull and dreary years been objects either of indifference or aversion. Many articles of household use and ornament, that had been put into dark and unvisited nooks and corners, were brought out into the light, cleared of dust and cobwebs, and, under the assiduous hands of Mysie, now endowed with all the alacrity of a young person, acquired a new polish, and added new comfort and neatness to the dwelling. The number of chairs was increased in the kitchen-parlour—the windows were cleared of stains and imprisoned flies, dead or alive—some flower-pots, geraniums, and hydrangias, and even a myrtle or two, under the fostering care of Margaret Lyndsay, diffused a lively feeling of natural beauty from wall to wall—and nothing that could stain the cleanliness of the abode was unremoved, except the clay-nests of the swallows, which were all held sacred—an old colony

whose regularly returning children were vernally expected, with their undisturbing twitterings, to the eaves, sheds, and window-angles, where they had made good their inheritance by a tenure of unnumbered summers.

Miss Wedderburne, too, had, shortly after Margaret's departure from Edinburgh, forwarded to her at Nether-Place all her little property—her apparel and her books. She frequently sent her likewise a variety of little presents, framed by her own hands, and those of Harriet and Frances; and these gifts of true and unfading affection touched Margaret's heart with the most delightful remembrances, and with equally delightful hopes. The old man was proud whenever any dispatch arrived by post or carrier; and considering his niece now quite as his daughter, every kindness to her seemed a favour done to himself, and kept his heart open to the best feelings of humanity. Every evening he sat in his old arm-chair, not as formerly dozing in feverish reveries, or in dull insensibility, but listening to Margaret's conversation about her past life, of which he never could hear enough, or to her readings from the books composing her little library—sometimes even to a song. He was a man of a strong understanding; and strong feeling was the power to which all his life had been subjected. Old as he was, he entered with all the interest of a young mind into subjects almost new to him; and any additional piece of knowledge he acquired, any pleasure

his mind received from the volumes read to him, increased and enlivened his affection for the kind reader, and rendered her every day more and more essential to his happiness, and to the very continuance of his life.

Margaret knew and felt for all the strong peculiarities of his character; and before winter set in, gently hinted to him that she had been a very idle inmate of his house, and ought to do something for her own maintenance. She at last ventured to propose taking a few scholars, so that she would both be doing good, according to the measure of her abilities, and be able to repay her uncle for the expence he had incurred about Nether-Place on her account, or at her suggestion. Daniel Craig was not displeased at such proposal—for the habits of his long life were still strong upon him, and although he loved his niece most tenderly, and, miser as he was reckoned, would have sacrificed all his substance to prevent any evil happening to her, yet industry, he said, was always better than idleness, and money made honestly to one's self, and usefully to others, was a great gain. So it was understood over the parish that Miss Lyndsay was to open a reading, writing, and sewing school at Nether-Place.

There was a large room, formerly a kitchen when Nether-Place had contained two families, but now filled with peats, potatoes, and useless lumber. It was emptied—the walls plastered anew, where they required it—the whole white-washed—the floors cleans-

ed—a grate put into the wide chimney—the wir glazed—and in a few weeks nothing could be comfortable, or better adapted for a school-room fore the first fall of November snow had whi the tops of the hills, twenty female scholars we their various tasks—from the adjacent farm-hc from the huts interspersed among the hollows, from the small metropolitan Village of the parish so happened that the Teacher was old and pal and there was a good opening for a person of per qualifications. But Miss Lyndsay's name enough; and old Daniel, who had for many y lived a solitary and noiseless life, was quite ha to see the little lassies appearing "with their s ing morning faces," was no way disturbed by pleasant murmuring sound of the school-room, often looked out of the door, in the afternoon, to the innocent and happy creatures dancing away h in fair or foul weather, over the green fields, or wreaths of snow.

Nether-Place, which had, for so many years, b considered a cold and secluded spot, standing by self, and unstirred by the life that moved through the rest of the parish, was now absolutely the ve centre of the whole; and so much happiness was rived to so many ingles from Margaret Lyndsay's j dicious and conscientious instruction of her you pupils, that its name was upon every tongue at chur and market. It began to be said, that on the dea

of old Thomas Howie, Daniel Craig was to be made an elder; much more respect was now shown to him on Sabbath in the church-yard before Divine service began; he was frequently seen going into the manse; and many who had heretofore looked on him with repugnance, or almost contempt, saw now something venerable in his grey hairs, and hands opened respectfully for him the door of his pew in the kirk, that not long ago would have remained idle, rather than render him even an essential service. Old stories of the sufferings of his earlier life revived; and it was at last universally allowed that the old man must have a good heart, who gave so willingly and disinterestedly his protection to an orphan niece whom he had never before seen, and whose parents had slighted his relationship. All this was felt by Daniel, at first perhaps painfully, as a reproach on his past life; but he knew what was known but to few, and much that was known to none but himself; and, therefore, he soon took all their new awakened kindness in good part, repaid it by an altered demeanour, gave and received visits, and, in short, became a cheerful, and almost a social old man.

The winter thus passed on at Nether-Place, as no winter had done for upwards of thirty years. There were even Christmas parties, with wine and cake at tea; and the large green square-sided bottle of spirituous liquor shed an unwonted radiance over a jovial company. Young men and maidens, brothers and

sisters of Miss Lyndsay's scholars, matrons of extensive compass, and heads of houses with large buttoned single-breasted coats, and warm plush breeches, graced Daniel's festive board; nor were there wanting sharp-faced, snuffy-nosed maiden aunts, with clever countenances sourishly and tartishly disposed, critical even in the rural shades of the manners of town-bred Miss Margaret Lyndsay, and who stretched out their long lean mittened arms to catch the cup whose tea they threatened severely to judge and to drain, even to the fifth cup turned upside down upon the saucer, with silver spoon laid across, in silent refusal of the exhausted lymph. A few of Margaret's scholars kept moving to and fro on little offices between the tea-table and the heartsome circle that environed it; and when all was over, kettle taken away by Mysie, and bread and butter melted like snow, then old Daniel looked about him with a face that was felt, and gave a grace, during which, long as it was, not a whisper or a titter was heard, although mirth and merriment trod close upon the Amen.

The winter thus passed on, in constant occupation, and occasional amusement; and Margaret Lyndsay, in the discharge of unambitious, but not unimportant duties, in all those unremitting and earnest attentions to her uncle, whose worth every day became more apparent in some little affecting trait, and in the natural growth and increase of her own silent thoughts and

incommunicable feelings, was, perhaps, on the whole, more tranquilly and continually happy than she had ever been since the thoughtless days of her childhood at Braehead.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"HERE is a letter from my brother," said Margaret, with a face beaming in tears and smiles. "He has been cruizing in the North Seas, and his ship has put into Leith. He will be here in a few days." Her uncle heard the news with strong pleasure; and Mysie, who was a principal personage on all such occasions, forthwith began to look after her department, and to get ready a comfortable cabin for the sailor. "The North Seas!" said Daniel. "Stormy regions during these March winds, nae doubt—but what care the crew o' a great ship for ony thing on earth or sea? I hae been twice on board a man o' war, and I wud not hae felt fear myself in her far aff on the great deep. But do you think your brother will like Nether-Place? It will be oure lown for him."—"The lowner the better for one who has led his life," said Margaret, and thankful was she to God, in her inmost heart, that her brother was spared to see her once more, in so quiet a haven.

The spring symptoms were astir over the fields and

garden; and old Daniel was anxious to put the place into neat order. "The hedges will do—I clipped them wi' my ain hands last back-end, and at your suggestion, Margaret; and, nae doubt, they make the avenue look a hantle tosher. It will no be the waur o' a bit sprinkling o' fine gravel frae the burn-side." That was done; the flower-borders dug over into a fresh looking blackness; all the withered yellow winter leaves swept away; and in a day or two it seemed as if Spring had made a fortnight's advance, when every thing had been removed that could impair the soft stealing beauty of renovation, and the fair spirit of reawakening life.

A large merry wood-fire, backed both by peat and coal, was blazing in the kitchen-parlour, the room in which they had all continued to sit, for it was endeared to Daniel by long habit, and even by its dullest remembrances, when Margaret, who for several days had kept looking through the window every ten minutes, was the first to behold her brother. His gallant uniform told her it was he, otherwise she could not have known, in the tall, strong, full-grown man before her, the boy of sixteen, whom she had last seen, on the day, alas! Harry Needham was drowned. But triumphant joy destroyed all sad recollections in one flash; and the happiness in that house was perfect. In about an hour, old Daniel said he was wearied with his day's work, and would go to bed; Mysie also retired to her garret; and brother and sister, long sepa-

rated, and with much to speak of that migh
rend and revive the heart, sat up by the fire-s
midnight.

For several days the old man was somewhat
pointed in the hopes he had formed of the
sailor. He had hoped to hear of strange and d
ous adventures, of things altogether different fr
own experience, and of wonders, to the reci
which he was to be a silent and astonished li
But, instead of all that, Laurence Lyndsay was
ful but sedate, courteous but not communicativ
fonder of walking across the quiet fields, and l
banks of the bonny burn with his uncle, than o
rating the perils of the sea, and stories of scene
which his mind was willing to relieve itself in
forgetfulness. Yet still there was something
manners and conversations that touched the old
heart with pleasure and affection; and he ha
been a week at Nether-Place till the two were i
rable, and it looked as if Laurence had been a d
there all his days. Little as he spoke of his owr
fession, that little was enough; and the curios
Daniel Craig being constantly kept alive, and
stantly fed by anecdotes and tales that came nat
and carelessly from the lips of the sailor, he fe
tached strongly, and by strong pleasures, to hi
phew, and wished that the gallant youth was n
soon to return to his ship.

Margaret did not suffer her brother's visit to i

fere with her duty to her scholars; and, when they tripped and glided away in the afternoons, she joined the fire-side party, and always at her approach new cheerfulness brightened over the hearth. Mysie sat, in her humble way, not far apart, making one of the family; and merriment and mirth, or grave discussion, brought on by the old man, and affectionately encouraged by the young, only ceased at the hour of evening worship, and was again more quietly renewed, for an hour or so, before their all retiring to their peaceful beds.

Margaret took her brother to her friends in the manse—the Reverend Mr Oswald and his daughter Lucy, who, from her first appearance at Nether-Place, had cultivated her acquaintance, and discerned at once the excellence of her character. There they often past an hour or two, both during the day and in the evenings; and Daniel was nothing loth to accompany them, for his secluded habits had made him too much a stranger with his worthy minister, and now he felt the satisfaction and the credit of being a visitor in the most respectable family in all the parish. Mr Oswald had been deterred by delicacy from wishing to change the long established habits of one who had been wearied with his little world; but now he welcomed Daniel to the manse as if he had been all along an intimate friend, and even hinted to him that, in the event of Thomas Howie's death, he must become one of his elders. A decent pride rose up in the old man's

heart at such a communication; and he show
the part he took in the conversation, that he had
glected in his apparent misanthropy the best f
of human nature, nor yet allowed his underst
to sleep, either of the spirit or the forms of that
church establishment to which he belonged,
which, notwithstanding his morose life, he had
been a regular member. In this way, the fam
Nether-Place and the Manse became, in a we
fortnight, more intimate and friendly than th
been for nearly thirty years; and this great a
to his happiness and respectability Daniel attr
entirely, as it was right to do, to the two young p
of whose very existence he had, till about half
ago, been entirely ignorant. Therefore he love
both more and more as his own children.

The evening before Laurence left Nether-P
and he had remained with them nearly three w
Daniel asked him and Margaret to come into hi
bed-room; and after cautiously closing the do
if eaves-droppers had been as numerous as
whereas no one was in the house but poor old
at her wheel, he began to open his mind to
whom he tenderly called his son and daughter.
have been a hard-working man all my life—an
haps have made gold my God—too—too much;
may my Maker yield forgiveness. But now h
given me another and a new heart. Ye are b
and sister—and I see you love ain anither, just

ye were twa bairns playing amang the gowans. Ye are my natural heirs—and every shilling I hae shall be yours. When the auld man is gane, you'll make a better use o't than he has done.—You'll be mair charitable—mair open-hearted—mair liberal. But it is owre late to lament now—no owre late to repent." The young sailor spoke out boldly and loudly now, and told his uncle, that he was respected in the parish—that he had injured no one—and done great good in his time by his uprightness and integrity. "As for myself, uncle, I want none of your money—God bless you—but I will think of these few weeks when I am far off; and I now kneel down to bless you for your kindness to my sister, Margaret, and to beg that you will give me your blessing!" The old man's tears fell down over his wrinkled cheeks, when Laurence and Margaret both knelt down, and put their joined hands upon his knees. "May the Great God bless you both, all the days of your life, my dear children, and take you at last to his right hand, where he sitteth in light inaccessible and full of glory." They rose up, and sat down close to him, uttering not a word. "I have sent directions to get my will made. I leave Nether-Place to Margaret, and a thousand pounds forbye—and to you, Laurence, I bequeath the rest of my property, of value enough to make your life more comfortable—but your trade is worth far mair than I can leave you—stick to it like a man, and leave the rest to your God."

"Uncle, I came here, as you know, ignorant of your great kindness to my sister, and of every thing else. I need nothing—want nothing. I do not fear but that I shall be a Lieutenant before many years go over my head. I have some prize-money, but what care I for that? I am young, healthy, strong, hope to do my duty, and if wounded or killed before the moon is old, I trust humbly in God's mercy. I am a sailor, uncle; but God is not forgotten by them he sees on the great deep. I will return to my ship as happy a man as lives. What you have said about your intentions to Margaret is enough to make all the rest of my life pleasant, even if I fall into a French prison." Margaret had never once in all her life thought about wills or testamentary bequests. All she wished was a useful and innocent life; and now that her old uncle talked of dying, his words about hereafter made not the slightest impression upon her mind, nor did she care when his hour came, whether he was rich or poor. Perfect disinterestedness can live but in a woman's heart; and now that the old man's talk was about his death, she never, for one moment, thought of any thing but how to tend more affectionately and carefully his declining days, and make him forget, in a cheerful old age, the dull solitariness of a long manhood, slowly forgetful of disappointed hopes, and clinging to them long after all definite notion of their aim and object had been lost.

"Uncle, you send me to sea with a joyful heart.

Look at her—look at Margaret—when I was a runaway and reckless boy, she kept her mother alive—she sat by her death-bed—she took care of my poor sisters—she covered the table—she made their beds—she saw that they were prepared for the grave—she gave them decent burial—she prayed for them to God—and who instructed her—who upheld her—who made her what she is, good, innocent, and beautiful—yes, beautiful, most beautiful? The God whom she has served, who will never forsake her, and who now, at this hour, shows how He will guard the Orphan's head!" The old man sat silent in his chair, and kept his eye fixed upon the young sailor, while he poured out his brotherly affection in a voice altogether new, and with words so unlike the ordinary tenor of his quiet speech. Margaret wept, but Mysie knocked at the door, to announce the supper of milk and cakes, and the old eight-day clock struck nine with a cheerful din that relieved all their hearts from a load of emotion. In a little while the supper-board was cheerful as the night before, and Laurence told more sea-stories than ever he had done since he came to Nether-Place, of which the Battle of the First of June was of itself more than sufficient to keep Daniel's eyes open an hour at least beyond that of their usual eclipse.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

For a considerable time after the sailor's departı Nether-Place was somewhat dull and spiritless; and niel kept closer to his arm-chair, roaming less over fields now that he had lost his youthful compani although Spring in its finished beauty was now alm lost in the leafy richness of Summer. Margaret's cupation among her scholars kept her cheerfulr uninterrupted; and looking on her brother as a n likely to rise in his profession, and to be happy on seas, her many fears for him were subdued down i an affectionate apprehension that lay quiet in her hea except when the winds roared louder than usual throu the elm-grove, and all its branches creaked in her in gination like the masts of a ship in tempest.

At this time old Thomas Howie died, and Dan was elected elder. This was an office of sacred hono which, a year ago, neither he himself, nor a single so in the whole parish, could have supposed was ever have been conferred on one so indifferently esteeme But now he was fully sensible of the renovation of h

own natural character; and he had, with that pride which the longest course of misanthropical habits can never utterly extinguish, for some months beheld the increasing respect with which he was treated by young and old. His grey hairs were now honoured; no jeering and sneering faces were now bent upon him; and the first Sabbath that he sat down in the elders' seat beneath the pulpit was perhaps the happiest in the old man's life.

Daniel Craig was now one of the best esteemed men in his native parish. The few friends of his youth that still survived met him in his own house, or in theirs, with unrestrained cordiality; he frequently entered doors which he had never darkened before; he took an active and useful part in the concerns of the Kirk Session; and not one of his brother elders was more frequently at the Manse, or seen oftener with the Minister. He accompanied Mr Oswald on his visitations; and he who had for thirty years been seemingly blind, deaf, and insensible to all the weal or woe of others, now said prayers by the bed of the sick, and gave alms to the poor. "Nobody ever doubted that he had a gude heart; and now ye see that loving lassie, or leddy rather, his niece yonder, has just warmed its blood, like a daughter sent to him in his auld age—and she has made her uncle a Christian." Such was the general feeling over the parish; nor was the old man himself ignorant how the happy change had been produced upon him—for never was

child dearer to parent than sweet Margaret Lyndsay now to him whose life she had blessed and renewed.

At threescore and ten, the morning and evening shadows are alike solemn—as they fall upon the bright fields rejoicing in the freshness of the dewy prime, or upon the dim landscape reposing in the gradual hush of the sinking sunlight. So was it now with Daniel Craig. He calmly counted the days as they glided by over the garden-dial now true to the changing heavens; and, especially on each Sabbath that wound up the week, he felt that he was so many steps nearer and nearer to his grave. That feeling gave him a tranquil happiness; and he looked over his beautiful Farm, with a sort of gratitude to the very clover lea-fields, the green meadows irrigated by a hundred little natural rills, and the deep loamy soil that sent forth the tall wheat—when he thought that they would sustain the life and the happiness of Margaret Lyndsay when he was gone, and perhaps too a sweet family of rosy-cheeked urchins, that would know his tombstone among others, in the cheerful church-yard gatherings, on future Sabbath-days.

Thus passed on the sunny summer among the silent shades of Nether-Place. "I am oure happy now," said Daniel, "oure happy to live lang here; and I humbly trust that I am mair fit for the great change." The mortal body will not wait away from the dust, for all the deepest happiness of the immortal soul;

and one Sabbath morning, Daniel having been longer of making his appearance than usual, Margaret went into his room, and found the old man lying asleep upon his bed, with a smiling countenance—but it was in that sleep from which there is no awaking, but in another region of thought and life.

Margaret had borne every affliction that could search the nerves round the core of her heart; and youth, innocence, love, and religion as native to that heart as mere human affections, had sustained her in them all, without any diminution of her happiness, although with a great change of its character; and, therefore, it was not likely that this loss should overwhelm her with such strong grief, as she had experienced at other dearer deaths. But the old man's face could not be looked at by the grateful and loving Orphan, without the fast flowing tears of holy nature; and she kissed the cold cheeks of him to whom the tender expression of human affections had for so many solitary years been wholly unknown; and with her own gentle hands she closed his eyes. But for him, she might have been a dweller under the roof of paid and mercenary charity; and but for her, he might have died in his loneliness, sullenly, and without those pious feelings that are best cherished by the breath of merely human love. The old man's latter days had been happy; and the shadow of death had fallen upon him at last, a few hours after a cheerful and fatherly conversation with one he loved, beside his own hearth,

while the Bible had furnished the last words utte to his deafened ear. Therefore all was right; Margaret and poor Mysie shut the door of his room, v many tears, but with that calm emotion that beh the departure of the aged, on whom this life has l had but weakened claims, and who are ready, by benign provision of nature, to yield, without res ance, to her eternal laws.

That faithful domestic now looked to Margaret her sole earthly friend. "I hae aye been kind to master, Miss Margaret; and surely you'll no send awa' frae Nether-Place, now that he is dead! I am willin', though no sae able, to work as before; gin you will keep me on about the house, I will d I can to be usefu'. I want nae wage—but I wud l to die here, up in my ain bit garret, for a' my fre are now dead, and I am a lanesome body on yerth."—"I do not know, Mysie, where I mys may have to go, yet I believe that I shall live here, this house. Whether I do or not, you are my frien and friends we shall be, as long as our Maker prolon our life." Mysie wiped the tears from her wither cheeks with her apron; and went about the usual co cerns of the Sabbath-day, just as if a heavy show of rain or snow had been keeping the family from t kirk.

Mr Oswald and his daughter, as soon as they hea what had happened, came over on the Monday Nether-Place. Every thing was ordered decently f

the funeral, and Lucy remained with her friend for two or three weeks after it was over. The will was found easily in the old man's small desk, with a paper written in his own hand, full of blessings on his niece; and Margaret Lyndsay was now the mistress of the house, and proprietor of the most beautiful Farm in all the parish of Casterton.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MARGARET LYNDSAY was now in the twenty-i year of her age; and if, as a girl, she had always b noticed even by the careless eye of the stranger, a creature rarely beautiful among her humble com nions, by the way-side at Braehead, or standing her mother's door in that lane of the city, she was n even more so than according to the promise of rising youth. The pure air of the country had gi colour to her pale cheeks; and her walks to the hou of the parents of her scholars, with her friend I cy Oswald over the hills of bonny Clydesdale a its solitary vales, each carrying down its sparkling vulet to swell the falls of Bonniton Cora-Linn a Stonebyres, had nerved her frame to a fuller loveline and given livelier elasticity to her steps. Now, t despondency and fear had fled far off from the C phan; she had not only enough of this world's mea to keep want henceforth from her own door, but wh was dear to her as the sunshine of Sabbath, to relie the distresses of her fellow creatures. Nature demanc ed no long deep grief from her grateful heart for th

death of her Uncle. He had died full of days; and life was now before her to enjoy it in contentment and innocence.

She was beautiful, and she knew it. At least she knew that every one looked upon her with kind eyes; and, no doubt, she frequently heard, without thinking much or at all about it, praise of her beauty in compliment, courtesy, or affection. Her disposition was by nature gay and lively; and now that all clouds seemed blown away from the limited horizon of her settled life, her spirits reawoke to their former hilarity, and the countenance that had so long expressed chiefly pity, sorrow, or gratitude, now shone with smiles that told what enjoyment lay spread for her over all the common scenes and occurrences of this life. She made no violent changes about Nether-Place, for she respected the memory of her old kind uncle; and she swept not away any of the antique objects that had been familiar to his eyes, however rude or homely. But still there appeared all around the difference between young and old fancies; a spirit of brighter expression encompassed the avenue, garden, house, and adjacent fields; and, while every thing in itself permanent was not only allowed to remain, but was carefully protected, such as the Willow-Arbour, the root-seats, the high beech hedges, and the little shed, in whose niches the tufted bee-hives stood secure from every wind that blew —many little additions were made, and many little clearings away, that let in the beauty of Nature more

tenderly or more boldly upon Nether-Place, till the neighbours, who knew it best, declared that, though they could not tell why, it was far bonnier than before, and certainly not to be matched any where in all the Upper Ward.

Margaret was placed in a rank of society, neither high nor low; and it was precisely that most congenial with her humble and unambitious disposition. Far higher, indeed, it was than what she could ever have dreamed of a very few years ago, when there were rarely more shillings in the house than could purchase provisions to the week's end. But still it was low enough to keep her chiefly among the peasantry, and to make their houses the chief scenes of the festal familiarities of her heart. Her extreme beauty—her perfectly blameless manners—and her occupation—so great a blessing to the little parish, made her an object of no common interest to the few resident gentry all the way down the country as far as Cora-Linn; and as few important events, even in the private history of any family, altogether escape the partial knowledge of persons no way concerned, there was a rumour, various as the minds of those who heard it, of the real cause of her departure from the house of Mrs Wedderburne. There was something of romance, therefore, about the circumstances of her life to curious minds, with whom novelty or strangeness has such strong charms; and now that she was a lady, even of landed property, the very haughtiest

members of old rural races, distinguished by their fixed and immoveable obscurity for many respectable generations, began to hear something extremely genteel in the words "Margaret Lyndsay," and perhaps would have reconciled themselves to the misfortune of her becoming the wife of some one of the younger unendowed Clydesdale cadets. But Margaret had seen the perfect elegance of cultivated life in the family of the Wedderburnes, and had there repaid the kindness of her benefactress by sweet duties, unremittingly discharged to her own Harriet and Frances. Now, she was independent; and had no wish to sit at tables where she might have been pardonably enough looked on as a sort of curiosity or wonder, namely, a genteel girl out of a farm house, a lady risen from low life, the Orphan daughter of a mechanic, really not far from being on a par with the hoydenish misses of a squire's family, with red velvet gowns from the town, and red velvet arms to put into them from the country. So Margaret rather shunned than sought splendid hospitality; but always with gratitude and humility acknowledged every kindness and courtesy that she received from persons in a higher rank; and, above all, was delighted to see in her own parlour at Nether-Place those benevolent ladies who took an interest in the education of the children of the peasantry, and who, therefore, looked upon her as a benefactress to the whole parish.

Before many months had elapsed since her uncle's

death, Margaret had her wooers, although the two first on the list were not such as to represent the passion of love as any thing very tragic. Duncan Gray, portioner in Muirhouse, a young man of good morals, and not very bad manners, and supposed to be worth not far off a hundred pounds per annum, was the swain who took time by the forelock, and first hinted the modest request of Margaret's heart and hand. Some persons make wonderfully little account of such a request; and hold themselves entitled, after two or three times receiving a piece of short-bread, and a glass of elder-flower wine, to ask the lady who has given them such refreshment in marriage. The stride of transition seems long and violent; and in Duncan's case it was no sooner taken, than he saw in Miss Lyndsay's involuntary smile that he had made himself rather ridiculous. At the same time, there was some little excuse for Mr Duncan Gray of Muirhouse. He had a soul for music framed; and, rejecting other every-day-instruments of stop or string, he selected the Great Highland Bagpipe. On it he poured forth, not from his breast, but from beneath his arm, the loudest, longest, sighs, con amore and affletuoso. All the while he thus gave vent to the "windy suspiration of forced breath," he was in the practice, at tea-parties, of keeping his blown-up cheeks and staring eyes straight upon the countenance of Margaret Lyndsay; and, in the enthusiasm of the hour, he beheld her yielding to the voice of passion. He had mounted new rib-

bands on the drone of his pipes, red as the rosy visage that puffed below; and pity the delusion of the fond youth, if he felt himself and his chanter to be irresistible. But Duncan Gray was a stout young swain, who lived in a high latitude, and had an excellent appetite; so, when he found that Miss Lyndsay preferred a single life, he had recourse to corned beef and greens, and it was not thought generally over the parish that he lost a single pound of flesh on his refusal. That refusal—in whatever words conveyed, and, no doubt, it was in Margaret's gentlest manner,—for it is said that no lady is absolutely angry with the very absurdest offer—was it appeared decisive. Mr Gray thenceforth played less outrageously on the Bagpipe at parties where Margaret was present, and put his hand to his hat, on her appearance, with rather a hurried and abrupt demonstration; but otherwise, he was very much the same man as before, and began to pay frequent visits to Thomas Carstairs of the Haugh, whose daughter Rachel was, though no beauty, by no means contemptible either in talk, tidiness, or tocher.

The next on the list was one more likely, according to public opinion, to have been a thriving wooer—the Reverend Æneas M'Taggart of Drumluke. He was considered by himself and some others to be the best preacher in the synod; and, since Daniel Craig's death, had contrived to hold forth more than once in the kirk of Casterton. He was very oratorically dis-

posed; and had got the gold medal at "Glasgow College" for the best specimen of elocution. This medal he generally carried in his pocket, and he had favoured Miss Lyndsay with a sight of it once in the Manse, and once when they were alone eating gooseberries in the garden of Nether-Place. The only thing very peculiar in his enunciation was a burr, which might, on first hearing, have subjected him to the imputation of being a Northumbrian; but then there was an indescribably ascending tone in his speech, running up eagerly to the top of a sentence, like a person in a hurry to the head of a stair-case, that clenched him at once as a native of Paisley, born of parents from about Tynedrum in Breadalbane. Mr M'Taggart was a moral preacher; and he had one Sermon upon Sympathy, which he had delivered before the Commissioner, wherein were touches equal, or indeed superior, to any thing in Logan—and no wonder, for they were in a great measure attributable to Adam Smith. This celebrated Sermon did the pious Æneas pour forth, with mixed motives, to the congregation of Casterton; and ever and anon he laid his hand upon his heart, and looked towards a pew near the window beneath the loft, on the left-hand side of the pulpit.

A few days after this judicious and instructive exhibition, Mr M'Taggart, with both Medal and Sermon in his pocket, rode up to the door of Nether-Place, like a man bent on bold and high emprize. Mysie was half-afraid to lead his steed to the stable—for he

was an exceedingly formidable looking animal, greatly above the usual stature of horses in that part of the country—as indeed well he might, for, during several years, he had carried an enormous Black hight Cupid Congo, kettle-drummer to that since highly-distinguished regiment the Scots Greys. However, he was not so fierce as he looked; but, prophetic of provender, allowed Mysie to lead him away like a lamb into a stable which he could not enter till he "had stooped his anointed head." Meanwhile, the Reverend Æneas M'Taggart was proceeding to business.

The young Divine took his place, after a little elegant badinage, on the parlour hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, and his coat-flaps opening behind, and gathered up each below an elbow—the attitude which of all others makes a person appear most like a gentleman. "Pray, Ma'am, have you ever read Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments?"—"No, Sir, I never have; indeed, from what I have seen said of it in other volumes, I fear it may be above the comprehension of a poor weak woman."—"Not if properly explained by a superior mind—Miss Lyndsay. The great leading doctrine of this theory is, that our moral judgment follows, or is founded on, our sympathetic affections or emotions. But then it requires to be particularly attended to, that, according to Dr Adam Smith, we do not sympathize directly with the emotions of the agent, but indirectly with what we suppose would be the feelings which we ourselves should

entertain if placed in his situation. Do you com
hend, Ma'am?"—"It would be presumption in
Mr M'Taggart, to say that I do perfectly compre
it; but I do a little, and it seems to be pretty n
like what you illustrated so eloquently in your
course last Sabbath."—"Yes, Ma'am, it is the g
which I unfolded under the stronger light of
advanced philosophy. You will observe, Miss L
say, that often a man is placed in a situation whe
feels nothing for himself, but where the judi
observer, notwithstanding, feels for him—per
pity, or even disgust"—and with that he exp
ed himself before the chimney, not unlike a
turkey-cock with his van-tail displayed in a f
yard. Margaret requested him to have the good
to take the poker and stir up the fire. "Certa
Ma'am, certainly—that is an office which they
man should not take upon himself, under seven
acquaintance; but I hope Miss Lyndsay does not
upon me as a stranger." Therewith he smashed e
ingly the large lump of coal, and continued, "T
Ma'am, as to the Sense of Propriety;"—but here M
opened the door, and came in with a fluster. "
conscience, Mr M'Taggart, that beast o' yours is
ing the crib—it'll take James Adams a forenoon
with his plane to smooth aff the splinters—he's a
vil o' a horse yon, and likes shavings better than
year's hay." This was an awkward interruption to
"young man eloquent," who was within a few p

graphs of putting the question. But Mysie withdrew —and Mr M'Taggart forthwith declared his heart. Before Margaret could reply, he strenuously urged his suit. "The heritors are bound to build me a new Manse—and the teinds are far from being exhausted. I have raised a process of augmentation, and expect seven additional chawder. Ilay Campbell is the friend of the clergy. The stipend is L.137, 17s. 6d. in money—and likewise from the Widow's Fund you will be entitled, on my decease, to L.30 per annum, be it less or more—so that"——Margaret was overwhelmed with such brilliant prospects, and could not utter a word. "Give me, Ma'am, a categorical answer—be composed—be quiet—I respect the natural modesty of the sex—but as for Nether-Place, it shall be settled as you and our common friend Mr Oswald shall fix, upon our children."

A categorical answer was one which Margaret did not very clearly understand; but she instantly felt that perhaps it might be the little expressive word—"No;" and accordingly she hazarded that monosyllable. Mr M'Taggart, the Man of the Medal, was confounded and irritated—he could not believe his ears, long as they were; and insisted upon an immediate explanation. In a few minutes things were brought to a proper bearing; and it was felt that the Sermon on Sympathy had not produced the expected effect. It is grievous to think, that Æneas was barely civil on his departure; and flung his leg over old Cromwell with such vehemence, as almost to derange

the balance of power, and very nearly to brin
pride of the Presbytery to the gravel. Howeve
regained his equilibrium, and

> "With his left heel insidiously aside,
> Provoked the caper that he seemed to chide,"

till he disappeared out of the avenue, from the
dering eyes of Mysie, who kept exclaiming, "
us—he's like a rough rider! Luke now, the b
funking like mad, and then up again wi' his for
like a perfect unicorn."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was at the Manse where all Margaret's leisure hours were past, when her young scholars had left her in the afternoons, and when she desired to enjoy the pure and glad pleasure of friendship. Lucy Oswald was two or three years younger than herself, and in the busy retirement of her father's house, who had been for a long time a widower, she had had few and short opportunities of lending her heart to girls of her own age and condition. She had therefore fastened on the friendship of Margaret Lyndsay, with all the eagerness of a new natural delight, and felt towards her the unreserved, yet respectful love of a younger sister. Mr Oswald, too, was in every respect like a father to her; undertook the management of her property; gave her advice on all matters relative to a country life; and, indeed, the fields between the manse and Nether-Place were seldom a day without seeing some one belonging to one or other of the families passing to and fro. There was a little wooded glen about half-way between, on the fanciful Chinese bridge

over whose rivulet, built by a worthy retired Glasgow merchant a native of the parish, Margaret and Lucy met by appointment almost every day; and at such times they often spoke to each other of their absent brothers. Laurence had been pleased with sweet Lucy Oswald, and she with him, more than either of them knew; and that unconscious affection bound the innocent girl's heart still more tenderly to Margaret. On the other hand, she never tired of speaking of her own brother Ludovic, who had never been at home since Margaret came to Nether-Place, and who was an Ensign now abroad with the army.

Ludovic Oswald had been severely wounded, and was expected home every day, on leave of absence, till his strength should be sufficiently restored for service. The new prospect of his arrival diffused more than ordinary cheerfulness over the Manse, and well could Margaret, from experience, enter into the delighted feelings of the father and sister of the gallant young soldier, about to return with wounds and honour to the home of his boyhood. Every one in the parish spoke with enthusiasm of Ludovic Oswald; praised his free character, and his fine appearance; and said, that no doubt he would return home cured of all his wildness, and make happy his father's heart at last, which his former thoughtlessness and errors had sorely disquieted, and indeed well nigh broken.

Mr Oswald was a man of strong native sense, and strong native feeling. His affection for his two chil-

them filled every corner of his heart; and there was nothing in the discharge of his quiet and regular duties, as the clergyman of a small parish, so to occupy his mind, as to exclude their image. Had he belonged to any other profession, and mixed with the stirring world, a man of his energetic character would, no doubt, have engaged strenuously in the affairs of life; but as it was, the sphere of his usefulness was calm, and in its undisturbed quiet, the whole of his affections, after his wife's death, flowed towards his children. Lucy had lived in innocence and joy; and with her his parental affection was clear and unclouded as a summer's day. But Ludovic, although distinguished for the generosity and fearlessness of his character, had always been weak in his will, and unsteady in his principles, so as to afflict his father with bitter disappointment, and all the heart-sinkings of a moral grief. At last he entered the army, as a private soldier, and for several years had not been heard of, so that his father had almost wept for him as one among the dead. But at all times foremost in desperate achievements, he had attracted the notice of his officers, and his respectable parentage becoming known, he had been made an Ensign. In that rank, he not only maintained, but increased his reputation for valour and daring enterprise; and was now about to return to the house of a father, who remembered his vices and follies no more, except in as far as the remembrance deepened his affection for his only Boy; while the thought of his wounds and

sickness brought an increase of tenderness into that heart which had so often and long bled over his rash and culpable transgressions. Lucy, who knew less about her brother's errors, looked forward to his return with unmingled rapture; and she could not praise him more to Margaret, than by saying that he was as kind a brother as Laurence seemed to be, and, no doubt, equally brave in the presence of danger and death.

Ludovic Oswald arrived at the Manse one evening when Margaret was there; and in an hour or two after the restless joy of the first meeting, Lucy and he walked with her to within a field of Nether-Place. Love, at first sight, is perhaps not prudent, but it is not uncommon; and although Margaret Lyndsay had lived too much for others, and too little for herself, to indulge any hasty emotions of any deep nature, yet now, in her freedom from all present anxieties, and in the softened remembrance of a life of trial, her pure heart expanded towards the happy scene she had just witnessed in the Manse, and she inwardly acknowleged, that Ludovic Oswald was indeed a noble looking youth, and that he bore bravery and gentleness upon his forehead. Next day she saw him with pleasure—the next again with delight—and in a few short weeks, Margaret Lyndsay loved Ludovic Oswald with a love pure, innocent, and thoughtless of futurity, but still love that was never to pass away, and that was felt by herself, almost in sadness, to be all unlike her regard for one who had too dearly loved her for his

own peace, Richard Wedderburne. She now felt, that to visit the Manse daily, and to receive visits from its inmates, was a delightful, but ought almost to be a forbidden thing; and frequently she stopt short at the Chinese bridge, and returned to Nether-Place.

Margaret was now in possession of peace, quiet, competence, health, a clear conscience, and the esteem and affection of every soul in the parish. Yet now it was that she began, for the very first time in her life, to be unhappy—to be subject to fits of despondency and sadness—and to look over the green fields and the blue sky without any emotion of pleasure. Towards the Manse her heart now turned, not as it had hitherto done, with the bounding glee of affection, but with a humbling and troubled delight, of which it felt well that Lucy was not the object. When she looked back on her departure from the family of the Wedderburnes, for which they had given her so much undeserved credit, she asked herself what she would have done had it been Ludovic Oswald, from whose love she had been ordered to fly? She might have obeyed her benefactress and her mother; but it would have been in despair and misery; and she might just as probably have set herself against her duty to them, and married him who had beseeched her to be his wife. That was a trial where the temptation was but weak, yet had she sometimes felt pride in having withstood it; and she had now and then suffered the pleasing flattery of self-love to delude her imagination into a belief of an imaginary virtue. Now

her innocent heart was beginning to become the p
of passion,—and that passion coming suddenly u
her, in the calm of her life, startled her with an i
of sinfulness and guilt. How dared her heart to l
so towards Ludovic Oswald, one who, in a montl
two, would be leaving his father's house, and in
dangers and hardships of an honourable profession
which he had already almost lost his life, what thoug
would ever he have of her, so foolishly and wicke
devoted day and night to his image? But all tl
struggles, between delicacy of feeling and purity of s
on the one side, and love, sudden, strong, and deep
the other, served but to render the young, sick, wou
ed soldier more dangerously dear—and, day after d
his languid countenance, brightening up through
dimness of exhaustion and pain, with the flashes of
bold and heroic nature, became more irresistibly be
tiful, and his voice, yet coming tremulously fron
breast that the bayonet had scarred, thrilled throu
her heart-strings, with sharper and more frequ
pangs.—"I love him—Yes, I love him better tl
life and all it contains, and I know that I must be r
serable for ever!"

But her passion was not wholly misery. How bea
tiful now was that little glen!—how like a paradise
its deep, rich, dewy, murmuring, and umbragee
calm!—How blest to walk with Ludovic and Lu
down the secret channel of the rivulet, and sit wi
them on seats of living stone, in niches formed by n

tune in the rock-walls that were all embroidered with a thousand dyes, and that waved gently, as a sigh of wind came rustling down the banks, with their graceful and gorgeous curtains of pensile sprays intermingled with buds, blossoms, flowers, and weeds, all alike beautiful in their untamed and balmy luxuriance! Then what dreams of night repeated in a more heavenly happiness these hours of day! Imagination, left free to be the minister of delight to innocence, then put words into the lips of the young soldier that dissolved Margaret's very soul in bliss. He would return to the wars no more; for all his future life her smiles were sufficient;—he pressed her to his bosom, and called her his wife, and then Margaret awoke to tears, and again renewed the same dear delightful distracting and destroying evening walks with her friend and lover; and again, night after night, dreamed the same or other overwhelming dreams! And lover he was indeed, and soon declared his love, not in a dream, but in a waking hour of the dim silent twilight, when Margaret's soul fluttered, and almost failed within her, on hearing Ludovic Oswald ask her to become his wife.

One little month had not yet seen its Sabbaths since Margaret Lyndsay had first beheld the man whom she had now promised to marry! And as she leaned her head on his bosom, she felt an upbraiding of conscience that she had delivered up her whole future life into the care of one whom she so little knew—who might be unprincipled, capricious, violent, selfish, without

piety—not even in heart a Christian! For, did she know—was it not the talk of all around, that Lud Oswald, although generous and brave, had stained early youth with vice, and had sorely disquieted hi ther's life? Was it his voice—face—person—manne that she loved? Or was it the man himself, his cha ter, and his virtues? Did she first know and then l the excellence of his nature, breathed in calm thoug and embodied in meritorious actions? Or was it vai idle—aimless enthusiasm all? A dream, beginning in lusion, and, perhaps, to end in darkness and despair. She knew not—could not know—but that she lo him was all she knew; and before lifting off her h from his bosom, an oath was sworn, on which hung happiness or misery of all her days to come in t world.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

What joy was in the life of sweet Lucy Oswald when she was told by her brother that Margaret Lyndsay was to be his wife! She flew on wings to Nether-Place, and embraced her sister almost in a delirium; but Margaret's face was paler than usual, and her eyes as if red with weeping. In solitude, and before God, she had communed with her own heart, and all was confusion and bewilderment. She had sworn a solemn and a sacred oath to Ludovic Oswald, and it must not be broken; yet unhappy fears, respecting his disposition, character, principles, and faith, now forced themselves into her agitated bosom, and she felt that such love as hers was already beginning to be troubled, and might some day become utter misery. "O! what weakness is mine," thought she, "to yield up my soul thus to one whom I so little know!" But Lucy was now weeping with joy upon her neck; and the two friends were in a few minutes composed and happy. Lucy's voice was very like that of her brother's, and its tone revived Margaret's heart; the con-

tagion of her joyfulness could not be escaped; so arm in arm, and with many of their customary smiles, they returned to the Manse, and Margaret received the solemn and somewhat sad benediction of him who was soon to be her father.

Mr Oswald, as soon as Lucy had left the parlour, took Margaret into his own room, and tenderly embraced her as his own child. "I have much to say to you, my beloved Margaret—much, that I fear you know not of—but which it is right you should know. From a father's lips alone could rightly come the words I must now use." Margaret sat down breathless with strong emotions, of which a vague and indefinite fear was the chief. Mr Oswald's countenance was not very gloomy, but it was very mournful in its strong, almost stern lines and furrows, and even a tear or two made their escape. "You have promised to become the wife of my son, Ludovic,—God, in his infinite mercy, grant that he be a good husband to one so good; but, had I known you loved him, I should have thought myself called on by nature and religion to beseech you not to pledge your faith to him, until he had given proofs of penitence for his great past guilt, and of a restored heart." The poor girl quaked at such dismal words from the lips of a father, speaking of his only son to the woman who had promised to be his wife. "Oh! Sir, if Ludovic has been a great sinner, he must be a true penitent—he must, indeed. Tender and affectionate does he seem to be to his father and

his sister; and, for myself, I am not afraid. It will be my own fault if ever he uses me ill when I am his wife."—"Yes, my dear child, my Ludovic loves his father and sister—and no doubt—no doubt—well must he love thee, else had he not a human heart. But what is love to the creature, without fear of the Creator? Oh! Margaret, I must speak! My son broke the heart—aye, destroyed even the life of one not so good—no, not so good—but as young, and almost as beautiful, as thyself. My son was a seducer—and, in the eye of God, what other than a murderer, since she, whom he betrayed, died at last of a broken heart?" This was a blow wholly unexpected and strange to the innocent and unsuspecting Margaret. Ludovic Oswald a seducer and a murderer! He whose voice was so sweet—whose eyes were so mild—whose manners were so gentle—he who had faced death so many times on field and fort, and like one who had been made brave by a good conscience! Was she to be the wife of such a man? And oh! did her heart tell her that it loved him, even now, with undiminished and agonizing love; even now, when his own father's lips had pronounced him so dark and so cruel a criminal!

Mr. Oswald told Margaret how Ludovic had betrayed to sin and shame the daughter of a respectable man—how she had followed him abroad—and shortly after died of hardship and remorse. "The story is too well known by many hundreds to have remained always a secret to you, Margaret; and as a father, and

a minister of Christ's word, I have held myself bound to tell the truth. If my son confessed not his guilt to you—if he has concealed his iniquity from you, then the promise of marriage you made is void; and God, I think, will hold you innocent if you depart from it." Mr Oswald uttered these words with a faltering voice, and in great agitation. Margaret had now regained some strength, and her heart beat less quickly in what had seemed a thick and dusty atmosphere. "No, father—for by that name I call you, with all the love and reverence of a daughter—I will not break my promise—nor do I feel that, if I did, the great God would hold me guiltless. I will be the wife of your son—sinner as he has been, and may yet be—and if I can lead him to repentance, then will I lay down my head, and die in peace."

Ludovic Oswald entered the room with a happy countenance; but their appearance at once struck him white and dumb as a ghost. "Father—Margaret—what is this?" "O Ludovic—your sins are great—and you have deceived me indeed—but what are now my sorrows to those of her who died in shame, sorrow, and sin, and all for your guilty sake?"—"Will you then abandon me—Margaret—and have all your oaths been but empty air? Will you leave me to die of these wounds? If so, let me depart this very night." There was long—deep—dead silence—and of the unhappy three the father sobbed loudest, and walked up and down in the room, even wringing his hands. "My poor

boy—if I love thee, in spite of all thy guilt—so perhaps may she continue to do, who knew it not, and may now hope to assuage in thee the darkest sorrow of the soul—remorse. Margaret Lyndsay—will you yet become the wife of my Ludovic?—And in due time I will myself, with my own voice, make you my daughter."—"Yes—I will be his wife," and so saying, Margaret went up to him, as he sat seemingly stupified with shame, fear, and grief, and tenderly kissed his forehead, and wept upon his neck. In a little while she rose up and went her ways—silently—sadly—and blind to all surrounding objects, till she found herself in her own bed-room in Nether-Place.

What a change had come over her life in one little hour! The whole future seemed ghastly; and she shut her very eye-lids in a paroxysm of despair. Old Mysie had noticed the woeful alteration in her mistress, and was beginning to connect it, some how or other, with Ludovic Oswald. She was afraid to knock at the door, but the weekly postman had brought a letter for Miss Lyndsay from Edinburgh, and Mysie knew it was from Miss Wedderburne, so she contrived to steal into the room, and gave it, without speaking, into the trembling hand of the poor creature, who had been tossing upon her bed. It was from Miss Wedderburne—saying that her mother was dangerously ill—and that she now implored Margaret to listen to her son's addresses, for that he had been long utterly lost to himself and friends, and that nothing could save him but marriage with the woman he loved.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Sabbath morning lay in the perfection of its summer splendour over the beautiful parish of Casterton, and every cottage was peacefully preparing to send its inmates to the House of God. But at Nether-Place, the sound of the bell was faintly heard within the darkened room where Margaret Lyndsay still lay, oppressed with a load of miserable thoughts. This was the first time she had missed going to public worship since she had come into the country; but to look upon the faces of the Oswalds, under her present trial, was not possible, and she felt likewise, that, at this time, she would be well away from the church. As she lay on her bed, she saw the congregation all rising up to pray, and her own pew empty; she heard Mr Oswald's voice disturbed in prayer, and saw his dark melancholy eyes, under a brow knit by the pain of keenest feelings, looking upwards to heaven in supplication for the spiritual welfare of his flock—more especially of herself and his son. She accompanied the whole exercise of the day with her heart, and

when the old faithful and affectionate domestic at last opened the window-shutters, there came in along with the sunshine the sacred Sabbath air, as if freshly breathed from the lowly place of worship.

Margaret arose, and knowing that on that day no hand would lift the latch of the garden-gate, she took her Bible into the willow-arbour, and with it composed her heart. This was the Lord's day; and upon it the heart of every sinful and sorrowful creature, if inspired with religious faith, may humbly bring itself into closer communion with the Great Spirit of the Universe. In that quiet place, with the shadows of the flowering branches chequering the holy page, Margaret felt every passion laid asleep. Unconsciously she turned to those chapters where she knew there were comforts promised to the afflicted, and now every verse seemed to overflow with more merciful meanings, and to breathe a blessing farther and farther into her lately disconsolate soul. That book had been her support when watching by the bedside of her dying sisters—and nothing else but that book could have sustained her when she was hearing her mother's groans, and wiping away the big drops of agony from her forehead. When it was upon her knees, the power of this mortal life over her was subdued or destroyed; the shadow of the world to come was then brought solemnly over her thoughtful spirit; and an awe was felt, as if she were sitting more immediately in the presence of her Maker.

Tried as she had been with so many afflictions, throughout those years that, in our imagination of human life, we vainly think belong to happiness alone,—Margaret had not had recourse to religion occasionally to console, but at all times to keep her alive like the very air she breathed; and to her the Sabbath day was so entirely set apart to God, that upon it she could, with small effort, banish all disturbing earthly emotions, and keep it sanctified, without intrusion, to the great purpose for which it was designed. Nor is such solemn and serene observance of the Sabbath rare in the cottages of Scotland. In many thousand families, it is a day scarcely belonging to this life,—on which the poor man's soul, wearied and worn out by labour, poverty, or other ills, renews its hold on heaven. The turmoil of the week-days is no more remembered in the calm that then reigns within the religious house, than the sound of the waves that have beat against the vessel's side at sea, by the crew who have moored her securely within the circle of some land-locked bay, beautiful in its perpetual calm. Each Sabbath comes upon the earth with the unbroken holiness of all that have preceded it, and thus the simple dwellers in huts are born to its observance, just as a son is born to venerate his father's grey hairs. The Sabbath-day, therefore, is a day of refuge; and the clamours, sighs, groans, cares, anxieties, griefs, and guilts of life do not enter its dawn, but they lie in wait for the soul when it shall again come out

into the regions of this earth, once more to be harassed, turmoiled, and pursued.

Margaret arose on the Monday, with a mind calmed and strengthened—and then she considered the life before her in all its aspects. There was much to dishearten—much to wrap her prospects in fear; but to break faith with Ludovic Oswald, neither her heart nor her conscience could suffer, and although she now knew that he was not the character she had dreamed in her delight, but even deeply stained with vice, she wept to feel that she loved him with undiminished love and rather than not be his wife, would wish not to see the morning sun. Of Richard Wedderburne she thought with respect and gratitude, and since it must be so, with pity; but, adorned as he was with every accomplishment, virtuous, wise, blameless in reputation, and possessed of this world's goods—he yet was to her as nothing, when she thought of Ludovic Oswald, the son of an obscure country minister, poor, worn out with wounds, and, alas! a cruel and, perhaps, impenitent sinner. So she wrote a humble and affectionate letter to Miss Wedderburne, with many earnest prayers for her mother's recovery, but declining in sadness and sorrow to become her sister, and the wife of one of the best of men.

Monday evening came, and Margaret was still unable to go to the Manse; but she could not help hoping and expecting that either Mr Oswald, or Lucy, or Ludovic himself, would yet come over to Nether-Place.

In the twilight she walked down the lonely avenue, below the thick shade of whose trees nothing moved but the little flitting bat, and she saw a figure approaching; but it was nobody from the Manse. It was Michael Grahame of Lamington-Braes, an amiable young man who had been educated for the ministry, but who had been prevented from entering on the sacred profession by a long course of delicate health that seemed symptomatic of a consumption. Within the last few months he had regained his strength, and could walk easily from his mother's house to the Manse or Nether-Place, a distance of about five miles. He was now returning home from Mr Oswald's in the cool dusk of the evening, and knowing nothing of what had occurred between Miss Lyndsay and Ludovic, he thought of passing with her perhaps one hour of calm delightful happiness. For Michael Grahame loved her beyond all else in this world, within the secrecy and silence of his own thoughtful and melancholy spirit; the few chance hours that he lived in her presence were to him sweeter than all time beside; and sometimes hopeful even in his hopelessness, he had cherished for her a passion that preyed upon his veins, already wasted with a long slow fever, and agitated a heart often sad at the prospect of an early death. Nature had given him a soul of finest mould, endowed both with sensibility and genius; the deep religious feeling, that had prevailed over the whole course of

his education, had imbued his character with a pensiveness and purity that were felt by the very rudest; and his knowledge and information so superior to those of all around him among the simple country-people, gave to him an authority which he knew not he possessed, and made his name beloved and even venerated wherever it was known. In many respects he resembled that young poet whose writings he read with so much pleasure—Michael Bruce; and as he resembled him in genius, and virtue, and lowly estate, so also was the likeness perfect in sadness, sickness, and premature decay.

Never before had Margaret's pale face seemed so beautiful to Michael Grahame as it now did, with its sadness scarce visible in the shadowy light of evening,—and never had her voice sounded so silver-sweet as now beneath the umbrageous arch of the dewy trees, that almost hid the silent avenue from a sight of the new-risen stars. Full of deep sensibility and imagination in all his thoughts and emotions, the youth felt walking with an angel through the shades of Paradise, and a perfect satisfaction possessed his soul as he heard breathing near him the innocent and beautiful being whom he so tenderly loved, but whom, he knew, he was never to possess. Even the thought of death itself, which was seldom wholly absent from his mind, was now pleasant, and devoid of all fear. He felt his spirituality in the pure affection of soul to soul; and knew that he and Margaret would meet in hea-

ven. His conversation, therefore, was this evening more than usually full of beautiful images and serene thoughts; till, all at once, Margaret was inspired with an irresistible wish to tell him the story of her love, and to beseech him for his advice and counsel. So, walking together into the willow-arbour, they sat down; and she told him every thing as it was, her own love, and the shock she had sustained by the knowledge of Ludovic's vices and guilt.

She sat in the silence waiting for the voice of a friend; but Michael Grahame was speechless. A small spark of hope had vivified his heart, and now it was extinct for ever. Between him and the grave there had hitherto seemed often to glide a visionary creature altogether beautiful, who, with soft voice eyes and hands, moved him away from the burial-ground, back into the cheerful light of day. But now that fair phantom would never more stand between him and death; for it had been nothing but an image of Margaret Lyndsay, conjured up by his soul in its vain longings after human ties, and all was now seen to be a delusion and a dream. At last he looked upon her face—gently lifted up her hand—and then implored the blessing of God upon her for ever, with a voice at once so solemn and so mournful, that Margaret wept—less for herself than for him who was now her comforter.

Michael Grahame had been a playmate of Ludovic Oswald's in their boyish days, and he felt towards him that strong affection which so often subsists between

persons of opposite characters. He knew his vices and his greatest guilt; but in spite of all that holy hatred of vice which was in his own pious spirit, he gently judged this transgressor. Ludovic had always been kind to him at school, and by his strength and courage had guarded his timid and sickly boyhood from injury and insult. The gratitude Michael then felt for the preservation of his whole peace of mind, which would have been otherwise utterly destroyed in his helplessness, did not cease in riper years, and he, the thoughtful, blameless, and pious young divine, cherished a brotherly affection for the brave and generous, but inconsiderate, and, alas! unprincipled soldier. He, therefore, now spoke in praise of his many excellent qualities; told Margaret that such promise as she had made was sacred; and that she would be the means, under Providence, of reclaiming him from evil ways, and finally fitting him for the kingdom of Heaven. "With you to love him—to counsel him—and to show the beauty of holiness constantly before his eyes—Ludovic Oswald will become a good man, and a Christian. You ought soon to become his wife. He will leave the army—his wounds bravely received will not only justify him in so doing, but they render it necessary,—for another campaign would kill him—you will live happily here at Nether-Place. Your husband will become a farmer—and where is there a more quiet and pleasant life? I see nothing but happiness before you—and, when I am in my

grave, remember—O remember this evening, and gi
a sigh to the friendship of Michael Grahame."

They parted at the garden-gate, each under stro
emotion—and as soon as Margaret had gone into t
house, Michael walked away by himself, in the moo
light, to Lamington-Braes.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

There was not a single house in the whole parish of Casterton in which blessings were not called down from Heaven on Ludovic Oswald and his fair bride, on their wedding-day. He had been a favourite from his very childhood, both with young and old; and the singular hardships which he had encountered as a soldier in the ranks, fighting in foreign countries, and afterwards his distinguished honours as an officer when he had been found among heaps of slain, with the colours of his regiment round his body steeped in blood, had either obliterated from the memories of all, or softened down their moral judgments of his manifold and grievous errors. As for Margaret Lyndsay, her happiness was prayed for as for one not only blameless, and without faults, but who had been the best friend of their children, and the cheerer of all their hearth-sides. There was no reason why they should not be happy; and nobody had either doubts or fears that young Mr Oswald would make a good husband, and become on his own property of Nether-Place one

of the most useful and respectable of all the landho
ers in the country-side. Accordingly, there was n
hay-field for miles around in which long life and h
piness was not cheerfully wished to the young cou
as the milk-can went its rounds; and there was a k
of rural holiday both to the idle and the labouri
within all the green bounds of Casterton.

The marriage took place in the Manse, and t
were married by their own father. Mr Oswald
himself not an old man, but his head, at fifty years
age, was as white as that of fourscore; and, with
uncertain voice, he pronounced the benediction on
head of his son and daughter. The bridegroom tre
bled beneath his father's blessing, and the room
hushed when the father folded Margaret to his bos
and wet her beautiful braided auburn hair with
tears. He had united for ever in this life one of
most innocent of human beings with a man wh
frailties he had but too well known, and who, he fe
ed, was scarcely worthy of such a wife. But it was
own and his only son, and he ventured to hope t
with Margaret Lyndsay to cherish and protect,
nature would be born again, and that he would sh
the depth of his repentance by a life of well-doing a
religion. A band of young girls, who had been t
bride's scholars, all neatly dressed in white, were pr
sent at the ceremony; Lucy was bride's-maid; and t
evening sun sank behind clouds betokening calm a

beautiful days, and left the sky open in its settled serenity, to an unhaloed moon and the dewy stars.

Margaret was happy with her husband. He had determined to leave the service, and indeed his constitution had suffered so much from his severe wounds, that to have returned to its fatigues would have been death. In another year the lease of Nether-Place would expire; then he was to become a farmer, forgetful of all the woes of war, and to lead a life of peace among his own and his father's friends in his native parish. It was the duty of his wife to love and esteem her husband, and she did so, with all the simplicity, innocence, and fervour of her nature. The young couple were as happy as every one said they would be; and, after homely and heartfelt receptions at the houses of all who visited at the Manse, and forenoon calls at many a humble cottage, where young Mrs Oswald was received with smiles that illuminated the low-roofed and dim apartments, they became in their retirement constant dwellers within their own sweet Nether-Place, and the unnoticed current of their lives flowed calmly and lightly on, through week-days and Sabbaths, with as much happiness as belongs to this changeful and melancholy life.

There had, at last, been little of the delusion of the imagination with Margaret Lyndsay towards the man she loved; and as that had vanished, far deeper feelings had taken its place. Having voluntarily linked her fate with one to whose faults she was not a

stranger, her affection for him was made still more te
der by the hope that she might comfort his heart in a
its sorrows, and turn and keep it in the paths of peac
She did not try to persuade herself that she had ma
ried him merely that she might turn him from the e
ror of his ways; for she knew that she loved him b
too, too well, and that she was his fond and affectiona
bride. But she knew also that her love for him w
pure—disinterested—deep, and unchangeable; a
that no happiness on this earth could ever be to h
equal to that of seeing him respected and respectab
before his fellow men, and obedient to the laws of Go
in thought and deed. And in that happiness she w
not wholly disappointed; Ludovic Oswald was dome
tic in all his habits—kind to her—and willing to do goo
to all his neighbours. His religious feelings seeme
to be sincere, and his whole conduct to his father an
sister, and in all the relations of life, such as was de
lightful to be witnessed by her who now lived but fo
him, and in his virtues and worth placed all he
earthly happiness. The marriage turned out just a
every body had expected; and when the cheerful nev
white-washed walls of Nether-Place glanced throug
the trees upon the labourer in the field, or at the door
of the farm-houses in valley or on hill-side, many a
kind thought was sent towards the family within, and
many a prayer for long life to them—plenty and peace.
How delightful to the wife of Ludovic to see his father's face now unclouded with anxiety, and that ex-

cellent man restored to an untroubled life! She knew from his own heart-rending confessions what had been the solitary agonies of paternal affection. Of all sorrows, what can equal the fear in a father's heart for the welfare of the soul of an only son! Ludovic had played at his feet—had wept the transient tears of a child when his mother died—had grown up in beauty and strength—had sinned—suffered—repented—and been forgiven by his father on earth, as it was devoutly hoped by his Father in Heaven. And now he was living a tranquil and innocent life within a few furlongs of the house in which he was born—respected as well as loved—and attentive to all the charities of a Christian life. The very lines in his father's face seemed now to be smoothed, and there was nothing now but a reverend beauty in his white locks—all that spoke of suffering and sorrow had disappeared from the glistening silver of his head,—his tall person had now recovered its erect gait, and he walked up the steps of the pulpit like one whose youth had been renewed.

Scarcely a day passed that he and Lucy did not step over to Nether-Place; at times mirth, merriment, and joy rang through the house that had for so many years been dull and silent—and none ever left it without carrying pleasure away with them, and leaving a blessing behind. Yet such seemed the waywardness of the human heart—and such the imperfection of human happiness—that often Ludovic Oswald, even when sit-

ting by the side of his young beautiful wife, sank into gloomy reveries; and Margaret was sad to hear his long heavy sighs, often dismally drawn in sleep, as if from the very depths of his heart. Sorrow for past guilt, thought she, is now visiting him in his dreams, and his sleeping soul knows not of its own repentance. But he will awake to happiness—and so he did every morning; for, with one so good and so beautiful, who must not have been happy, even if conscious of something hidden, something too terrible to be known, and even if doomed inevitably to misery at last? Such was, indeed, the condition of Ludovic Oswald; and even in the bosom of Margaret Lyndsay conscience smote him both waking and asleep, and told him to prepare himself some day or other to forsake that heaven.

CHAPTER XL.

THERE had been something sad and mournful in the humble nuptials of Ludovic Oswald and Margaret Lyndsay, notwithstanding the rejoicings that had accompanied them in many a field below the open sky, and by many a hearth-side below the roofs of peaceful cottages. Nor had that melancholy diminished perhaps the happiness of the young, innocent, and beautiful bride. It had sobered her joy, and had, by many afflicting thoughts, turned her heart with a more yearning tenderness towards her husband. Young as she was, she had lived long enough not to imagine either perfect bliss or perfect goodness in this world; and the knowledge of her husband's transgressions carried into her heart, along with all the fondness of an entire affection, also pity and compassion, and a profound hope that in the calm of domestic life he would be restored to that tranquillity which an erring conduct had impaired, and which it must be her constant aim to revive and guard. More cheerful and smiling brides there had been many than Margaret Oswald; but few that looked forward to better prospects, in

faith of the power of virtue and religion to wipe away all grievous recollection, and to bring at last comfort and peace.

Her husband had left home for a day, on a visit to an old school-fellow, a few miles over the hills; and Margaret was sitting in the willow-arbour, during the short sunshine of mid-day in early winter, when Mysie came to tell her that there was a person who wished to speak with her—a woman with a little boy in her hand. While they were yet conversing, the stranger came towards them, along the garden walk; and Mysie, whose curiosity did not suffer her to forget her respect to her dear young mistress, went away. The stranger was rather meanly dressed; but she had an appearance and demeanour above common, and there was something in her voice and figure unlike a mendicant—something that, by its self-possession, rather intimidated, if not alarmed. She sat down without being asked on the seat, and Margaret, who had risen, did the same, without either of them for some minutes uttering a word. The little boy, not seemingly above four years of age, stood at Margaret's knee, and looked into her face with a smile; but there was something in his features and expression that struck to her very heart—for his eye, and the outline of his countenance, and the smile about his lips, at once declared that he was the son of Ludovic Oswald.

"My name is Hannah Blantyre—perhaps you may

have heard it,—if not, then Ludovic has deceived you even more basely than he deceived me. If you married him with the consequences before your eyes, then the guilt, the shame, and the ruin be upon your own head." Margaret heard the words—each one of them—and all of them together—in a hideous and horrible huddle, and she almost repeated them aloud in the quaking fear of some unimaginable evil. "Yes—yes, I have heard your name—I was told that you were dead—dead of a broken heart.—But how is this? Does my husband know that you are alive?"—"Ludovic Oswald is not your husband—he is my husband—the father of that little boy there whom you hold by the hand—and my ain wee Ludovic was born in lawful wedlock—Aye, sinner as I was when first he took me to his bosom—I was the wife of Ludovic Oswald when that helpless creature saw the light of this unhappy world." Margaret heard her words—her eyes were fixed with a ghastly stare on the sky, but they saw nothing—she did not faint—but a strong convulsion shook her—and she gave one shrill shrieking cry. "Poor woman," said the stranger, "I pity you—but my little Ludovic shall not be a bastard when I am dead. Had I had no bairn, I might have lived on in my desertion—for I know its father hates me—but shame shall not be on his bonny head,—therefore I come to claim my husband, and let the curse fall at last on the guiltiest head."

Margaret felt that there was dismal and dreadful truth in the woman's voice. She was no impostor—she had come boldly to her husband's house—she had brought with her their child—and there she sat, not insultingly, but relentlessly, and with a stern resolution to be acknowledged—a wife. "I was told you had died of a broken heart—and I have often wept for you, Hannah Blantyre—but henceforth, all my tears must be for myself—for in this world now hope is there none for me!"—"Neither is there any hope for me! I knew Ludovic Oswald before you ever saw his face—I lay in his bosom before he had ever loved you—I have been with him in places of blood and horror not to be thought of or named—and this is my—our boy—and none shall hoot him when I am in my grave—none shall drive him away from the play-ground, or force my Ludovic, pretty little fellow, to sit in a corner, in shame, and sobbings, and tears;—for he was honestly born—and his father shall say so—or I will call down God's eternal curses on his head. But I can prove our marriage, although he thinks not—and when my boy has been righted, what cares his miserable mother to sleep with the slime of worms?"

"Will you go and bring me from the house a cup of water?" said Margaret—and the woman instantly did so. She brought Mysie along with her, and they found Margaret lying on the ground.—They lifted her up, and carried her into the house. "And wha may ye be, and what hae ye been say-

ing, that has stricken my bonny young mistress into a deed faint? Are ye ane o' thae fortune-tellers, and hae you been frichtening her about her husband's being awa the noo, and obligated, wi' a' his wounds, to gang again to the bluidy wars? De'il tak a' the gang o' you—but did na her sweet innocent face upbraid you, woman?—See, see—she's comin to hersel."—"My name is Hannah Blantyre, you idiot—no spae-wife—so none of your staring," said the stranger fiercely,—and with these words, she threw water upon Margaret's face, who in a few minutes returned to life and sense. She opened her eyes, and instantly shut them again, saying, "It's all true—I see—no dream." Mysie sat down, confounded, and terrified—and the stranger stood with a face almost unmoved, and then half frowning, half touched with a dim and doubtful pity. "I believe all you say," said Margaret, "I am no wife—my name is Oswald no more—it is Lyndsay—you, and not I, are his wife—Yes—Ludovic Oswald is your husband, not mine—I am nothing but a poor miserable, deluded, and dying sinner."

Alarmed at the wild looks and words—the weeping and the sobbing, and the groans,—the little boy began to cry aloud by the bed-side, afraid even to touch his mother, and hiding his face. "Hush, brat," said she fiercely—and shook him with a strong arm till he shrieked. "Oh!—my God—are you the wife of Ludovic Oswald, and is it thus you use his child?"—"Yes—it is thus I use his child—and ask him

when he first comes again to your bed, how he used m
Ask him if he ever cursed me—if he ever left me b
hind him when the bayonets of the French were
hand—if he ever basely suspected me of infidelity t
him, my seducer first and my husband afterwards—
ask him if now he has married another—you yourse
—and if he dares to deny Hannah Blantyre to be hi
wife—if he will face God in judgment, after swearin
that this child is a bastard? Stand up, you wailin
imp—and let her see a child that may show it
face with the best bairns in all Scotland through
the son of Ludovic Oswald and me—Hannah Blan
tyre."

But it was not long before the passion of this injur-
ed and violent woman subsided. She had not com
to insult Margaret, but to vindicate her child's birth-
right. By degrees she felt pity for her whose life had s
suddenly been made just as wretched—more so—than
her own, and she even wept by the bedside. She was
asked to stay all night in the house; but that seemed
unnatural to her, worn out and wearied as she was; so
she took the refreshment that poor Mysie gave her and
her boy in the kitchen, and then said she would go.
"I passed a hovel—about half a mile off, on the road-
side. An old woman was at the door, who asked me
where I was going—and I said I might perhaps ask a
night's lodging from her, before it was dark. I will
sleep there—when your master comes home, tell him

where I am to be found."—And so saying, she wrapped her tall and emaciated figure in a tawdry worn-out red shawl, and taking her boy by the hand, she strode off, seemingly in anger, pity, and desperation.

CHAPTER XLI.

A STUPOR both of intelligence and of feelin
the silent, and, indeed, speechless sufferer in h
from that fatal afternoon till next mid-day, wh
awoke somewhat revived from a short two hour
The old affectionate creature had sat beside her
night long, and had frequently knelt down w
and said a prayer for the peace of her sorely t
mistress. Now and then Margaret had sat up wi
her bed, as the winter winds blew shrilly past t
dow, and the leafless branches that almost touc
roof creaked, swinging in the fitful blasts. A f
culations, uttered with clasped or clenched
were all that were heard from her during t
dark howling hours; and more than once, w
was lying exhausted, with white face and shut e
silent watcher feared she was dead, and stoope
over her lips to hear if they yet sent forth
the breath of life. Few words had the faith
vant been accustomed to utter in her quiet
—but not a few feelings were lodged wit

breast; and no mother could have looked upon her sick child with more eager tenderness than did she, who had long been a stranger to all emotions but those of mere common humanity, now look upon poor Margaret Lyndsay. She had been an orphan as well as her mistress; but she did not remember the time she had ever had a parent; as a slave almost had she lived in one house or another, working hardly and silently all her days; many of her latest years had been past in the service of old Daniel Craig;—and now, when the period of her life was near at hand, a new joy had been given to her in her love for her sweet-tempered and most beautiful young mistress living so happily with her affectionate husband. What a change was this! Grief, shame, ruin, horror, and despair, all at once, without any warning, brought into Nether-Place—and her master and mistress husband and wife no more!

About mid-day, Margaret, as if suddenly restored to her strength and self-possession, rose up, and told Mysie to go over to the Manse, and request Mr Oswald to come immediately to Nether-Place. She had lain down the night before in her clothes—and while the old messenger was away, she decently arranged her dress, and her hair, and washed the stains of weeping from her cheeks, before Mr Oswald should appear. A ghastly countenance it indeed was that met her in the mirror; and strange to her ear was the hollow voice of her own, "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner!" The

tread of her steps had a woeful echo in the silence of the house; nor, as she sat down on the window-seat, where she had so often reclined on Ludovic's bosom, had she courage even to look at her Bible, so sick in hopeless anguish was her miserable soul.

Mr Oswald, fearing, from the face of the old servant, that Margaret had been seized with some alarming illness, lost no time in being at Nether-Place, and Lucy was not one who, on such an occasion, could remain away from her sister. For a while Margaret sat like a stone before them, and only gasped when she strove to speak. "I am not a wife—Ludovic has deceived us both. But, Oh! Sir! I am your daughter still—Lucy, I am still your sister—and I hope that I may be buried in your burial-ground." These were words at first not to be understood; and Mr Oswald looked for a moment at Margaret as if he thought a quick fever had already touched her brain. But she continued—"Hannah Blantyre is alive—she is your son's wife—and she is here at hand to prove me an unhappy sinner." Mr Oswald took her to his bosom—and her beautiful auburn hair lay still as death beside his locks, that had for some years been as white as the mountain snow. Lucy, stunned by the communication of an almost incomprehensible misery, fell upon her knees and wept, for she alone could now weep, upon the motionless hand of her sobbing sister. Just then, the door opened, and Ludovic Oswald, with a smile upon his face, entered the room.

His conscience, although it had often gnawed him, had still oftener slept, for all love had left his heart for Hannah Blantyre; and his love was as deep and as sincere, as love could be in the heart of an unprincipled man, towards Margaret Lyndsay. His love had not been merely a selfish passion, kindled by her exquisite beauty and loveliness; but it was accompanied with the tenderest and sincerest affection. He believed that no proofs existed of his marriage with Hannah, and that the two persons who had been witnesses to it were both dead. But that signified nothing now; he dared not deny the truth in the awfulness of the scene before him, and first in the deathlike and ghastly silence of the miserable man, and then in his frantic agonies, it was seen by one and all that his guilt was even as it had been said to be, and that there was no hope. Margaret upbraided him not, for she felt as if on the brink of the grave, and her forgiveness was perfect. His father fixed his eyes, that expressed nothing but a glare, like that of haunted insanity, upon his son, who was weeping and gnashing his teeth, and tearing his hair, and calling upon God to strike him dead, and fiends to carry his soul to perdition. "Oh! Ludovic, Ludovic, what words are these?" said Margaret, with a voice gentle as that with which she had spoken the day she was a bride, and the wretched man fell down in a fit upon the floor.

Hannah Blantyre had seen her husband pass by from the door of the hovel; and, with her boy, follow-

ed him soon after to Nether-Place. With her long black hair streaming over her brown face and dark burning eyes, she too now joined them, who were lying down, or kneeling, or sitting, in the stupor of their great grief. When Ludovic Oswald awoke from his fit he beheld her visage, and shut his eyes, with a shudder and a shriek. "Am not I your wife? Here, take our child, and I will go my ways, never more to torment you. Had I foreseen all this, perhaps I might have suffered him to live in shame, and left him upon the parish, a pauper's brat. But the Great God is terrible; and woe be to all them who break his holy laws."

Mr Oswald had now recovered his fortitude, and he gently bade his son's wife, since such she was, leave the room for a little while, till the unfortunate man had regained some self-possession. "I will do so, Sir—I know not how this may end; but fain could I lay me down and die. My head is rending, and a strong fever is in my blood, eating me up. Come, my little boy, come away to our last night's straw. You all know where I slept, and there you will find me,—for I am not able to walk farther; and this is not the house for me." And casting her wild eyes, brimful of large tears, upon Ludovic, who was still lying convulsed upon the floor, and with a look, almost of pity, upon Margaret, she went away, and none stopt her, with her little thoughtless boy, to the hovel.

CHAPTER XLII.

Even a weak soul and a weak body will bear a wonderful weight of grief, before they lay themselves down in utter exhaustion upon the grave. But Margaret Lyndsay—for that now was her name once more—had a strong soul, and her frame, although delicate in its gracefulness, had been nerved by the constant and healthful occupations of an innocent, simple, and useful life. Grief, therefore, which at first had stunned and smote her down, soon left her at liberty to walk meekly about as before, and was unable to sink into the paleness of her cheeks the beauty that, ever since her childhood, had gained such general admiration and love. None ventured to intrude upon her in such affliction—none had a right to see her suffering under it, except Mr Oswald and Lucy; but they were almost objects of as great pity as herself, and perhaps supported themselves with less fortitude. For with her all hope in this life was utterly gone—and only where there is no hope can there be perfect resignation—a confused sense of never-ending ignominy, almost akin to sin, lay upon her soul day and night, rendering indeed

the night darkness grateful, and during the day binding her eyes down to the earth. Every tie that linked her to life was cut at one blow; this world was not for her; and she even longed, but still with the piety of her submissive spirit, to go "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Where was Ludovic Oswald? That none knew. He disappeared utterly,—and no traces of him could be discovered. It was said, some weeks afterwards, that he had been seen—or one like him—at a sea-port town, from which a transport with recruits had sailed for the West Indies. But this was an uncertain rumour; and many believed that he had died by his own hand in some remote and solitary spot, where it might be long before his body was found by huntsman or shepherd. Margaret did not fear this often—but sometimes the thought came to horrify her mournful desertion, and then it seemed to her as if life was a painful and sick swoon, too severe long to be borne.

Hannah Blantyre still lay in the hovel by the side of the high-road. Her long journey of many miles on foot, carrying her child almost all the way—and her carelessness of herself in that desperation, had completely exhausted her, and she could not, without pain, lift her head up from the straw. She was the lawful wife of Ludovic Oswald, and not to be forgotten by his wretched father. A few days had elapsed before that father could rise from his own bed; and on the

first Sabbath after this dreadful destruction of all peace, there had been no public worship. The kirk-door remained shut for the first time during many years—and the sound of that little tinkling bell was missed in valley and upon hill-side. But now Mr Oswald had strength to leave the Manse, and he walked over to Nether-Place. "I will accompany you to Hannah Blantyre,"—said Margaret, with composure.—"I wish to hear from her something more about my condition, —and, besides, I who have enough of this world's gear, will extend my charity—if indeed it deserve the name —to her who seems to have nothing." It was dusk, and Margaret putting her arm within that of her father—for so he was still—they walked to the hovel.

Its walls were built of mud, and its roof was turf. It stood upon a patch of ground where two hedges made an angle—in front the high-road, and behind a deep ditch choked up with brambles. An old crone had lived in it for many years—and harboured perhaps for a penny a night the houseless beggar. She was standing at the entrance—that shrivelled bowed-down beldame, with little Ludovic in her arms. The moon was rising, and the child was prattling about it and the stars to his withered nurse, quite reconciled to her haggard countenance, sunk eyes, and the mumbling voice of dotage. "Tell the child's mother to speak with us—good old Susan—My pretty boy,—I am your grandfather,"—and so saying, Mr Oswald took little Ludovic into his arms. Margaret shuddered—

but she too kissed the harmless creature that sr
and laughed, and murmured in the fulness of his
at the smoky door of the hovel, with his mother
within a sick and forsaken beggar. On hearing
were there, Hannah Blantyre rose up tottering
the straw, and came out into the open air, beggi
be allowed to sit down upon the bank. She did
while the others stood by—Margaret—the old w
—and Mr Oswald, with his grandson perfectly h
and now hushed in his bosom.

"I need not—cannot tell all the course of your
affection for me—it began surely in innocence w
both—at least so I thought—and it was long lor
deed before I knew any other thoughts. I sinnec
I wish not now to blame Ludovic for taking me
from my father's house. The old man—for o
was in his misery—has been for years dead—an
I been what I ought to have been, all this woul
have happened. I loved Ludovic—and I once th
he loved me—if he never did—the greater wa
sin." Mr Oswald was agitated by her voice, nc
much calmer than it had been on that dreadful nig
and something like the soft tones of innocent y
before she had erred, and become miserable,
dued the speech of the unfortunate woman.
set down little Ludovic on the bank beside his mc
and she took him, willing as he was to go from
to another, into her emaciated and ill-clad b
Margaret could not restrain her tears; and the

woman, who indistinctly heard what was said, but still listened with a confused curiosity, leant forwards upon her staff, and fixed her dim eyes upon the speaker. "Ludovic was about to embark, as a private soldier, for Holland, and I had either to stay behind, with this boy then unborn, or to try to leave this country with my seducer. He was indifferent to life as I was—and he acknowledged me to be his wife in the presence of several persons—two of whom, the wives of soldiers, are yet alive—Jean Thomson and Elizabeth Shaw—I can tell you where they both now are, although he believes them to be both dead. He wished me to stay in Scotland—but I went with him, and much hardship and misery I endured for his sake. You may well weep, unhappy lady—but you will forgive me, for, wicked as I was and am, yet still I am the wife of Ludovic Oswald." Margaret only said, "Yes—yes you are," and sat down at a little distance on the same bank.

"This child was born—and I nursed him. Need I say that I loved him better than myself, and gave him my breast to drink in hunger, thirst, starvation, and cold, often without a bed to lie on—no roof over us, no fire to warm us, on the road-side, and in frost and snow. But Ludovic had no trust in me—for I had broken my father's heart—and he accused me of sin I thought not of in my misery, and of forgetting that I was his wife. No doubt much evil, guilt, and sin did I see—and often have I suckled my little child

among the abandoned and the brutal, surrounded with curses, and oaths, and drunkenness, and shocking crimes. But had I been his wife here in this parish, at Nether-Place itself, and respected by the good and the religious people who live here, I could not have been more true to my husband than I was in that dreadful company. He hated me at last—drove me from him with curses as a prostitute—and I, alas! answered with angry words and a raging heart. I agreed to leave him for ever—and to take my child with me away from his eyes. Ludovic had been away from me with the army for two months, and all that time I was starving. When we met again, an officer had been kind to me, and given me food; but may I never meet with mercy, if I will not carry to the grave a body and a soul free of all sin to my husband." The poor creature ceased with a sob, and Margaret said, "I believe it—I believe it—your latter days may yet be past in peace."—"No—no—I am dying—and oh! that I had never come here! —for I see you are one who ought not to have been made unhappy. Take care, Mr Oswald, take good care of little Ludovic, and when I am dead, perhaps his father will return, and then you—yes, you—young woman, may be his wife, and perhaps live happy yet, when poor sinful Hannah Blantyre is in her grave."

The exertion of speaking so long and so vehemently quite overpowered the unfortunate woman, and she stretched herself out, with her child in her arms, all

her length upon the ground. "She is my son's wife," thought Mr Oswald, "and it is my duty to protect her while she lives. My son has confessed she is, and that is enough." He told her that she must not lie another night in the hovel, but be carried, with her son, to the Manse. For a long while she was obstinate—sullen—or angry in her misery, and in sight of the misery occasioned by her appearance among those who, in their ignorance, had before been happy. "I lived for three years without any hope of Ludovic ever seeing me again—I had agreed to that—and he supported me in a place remote from all who had ever known me. But I heard by chance of his coming home and marrying another—and then my heart boiled both for myself and this laddie. All may yet be right, when I am gone. I give my boy into his grandfather's hands. As for myself—let me die in this hovel—and you will pay the old woman for her trouble—and let me be buried in a corner, Sir, of your own church-yard—among nettles, or any where—without a stone—and let such a wretch be forgotten for ever." She rose up with these words—and moved towards the hovel—but she fell down, after a few steps, and crawled into the smoke. The little boy frightened, he knew not why, ran after her, crying upon his mother, and the old woman, tottering upon her staff, followed them into her hovel, leaving Mr Oswald and Margaret sitting without the power of motion upon the bank—while,

by this time, the sky was bright and beautiful all its luminaries, and perfect silence prevailed the clear winter night, that had yet scarcely lo softer beauty of autumn.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The parish of Casterton was but a small one, and although not shut out by impassable mountains from those that surrounded it, yet it was a cheerful seclusion within itself, and all its families were more or less interested in each other's welfare. The greater part of the inhabitants lived in the oblong vale that was nearly hemmed in by pastoral hills, and of which the little village that sat on a wooded eminence was the centre and the heart. About a score of houses were dropt down here and there in the glens that winded away up into the higher country, as if they had belonged to other parishes; but in their remoteness they still belonged to Casterton, from accidental circumstances in the history of the district, known only to antiquaries who had communicated their knowledge to Mr Oswald, when he was writing his "Statistical Account" for Sir John Sinclair.

In such a parish, such a tragical and strange mis-

fortune as had now befallen the family at th
and Nether-Place made a strong and lasting s
and at every fire-side afforded subject, not of
sipping and heartless talk, but of sad, and
and mournful conversation. Many a mothe
daughters had been taught by her almost
knew, wept bitterly for Margaret Lyndsay; t
now on the verge of maidenhood, who had al
ly loved their instructress, would have done a
to see her restored to peace; while the very
who had been accustomed to go to Nether-
meet their sisters in the evening, knew that sc
mity had fallen on her who used to smile upon
kindly, and they listened with hushed faces to w
heard their parents saying about her and her
It is scarcely possible to destroy utterly—to d
the very roots—affection for any human be
has long possessed it; and perhaps the c
is greatest in cases where the person belo
been of a very mixed character. When the
is complete—the fall from good to evil sudden
total reversal of opinion takes place—then ou
may be wholly crushed; but when, as in this i
we have known the imperfections of the m
falls into deeper and darker sin, we suffer no
revulsion of our moral judgment, and cont
think with affection still on him who has ceased
serve any part of it; being unable, for a few f

follies or sins more, to drive from our hearts a friend whom all along we knew to be loaded with imperfections. It was so now with every family in the parish towards Ludovic Oswald. Besides, their profound respect, indeed veneration, for his father, made it impossible for them utterly to condemn or abhor the son; and then, too, where was Ludovic now?—Dead, perhaps—or, if not so, worse than dead—wandering with remorse, nobody knew where, and probably seeking death in a foreign country from war or pestilence.

For several Sabbaths Mr Oswald's pulpit had been filled by young preachers, yet unplaced; and there were various rumours over the parish concerning his health, and the way in which he was bearing up under this blow. Some said he would never be able to appear in the kirk again, that his body was weak, and that his mind had even more sadly given way; but that was an idle rumour, for his elders had seen him, as well as several of his brethren, and it was known from them that, although unable to undertake the fatigue of Sabbath service, he was sound in mind, and perfectly resigned to his great affliction. Besides, Hannah Blantyre, his son's real wife, was at the Manse lying in a fever, which it was thought would prove mortal, —and what with her illness, and what with his own, both of body and mind, no wonder that their minister kept within doors. It was a great relief to the congregation that he did so; for they could scarcely

have borne to see his face or to hear his voice in that his sore and strange trouble and distress. It was something out of the way of human misery; and silence, retirement, and undisturbed communion with God, were felt to be necessary even for the very upholding of the life of one so terribly tried as their friend and father.

Very few in the parish had seen her who had come to claim her husband. It was known that she was in the Manse—dying, it was said—and deeply as they all felt for Margaret Lyndsay, deceived and betrayed as she had been, yet Hannah Blantyre was the wife of Ludovic Oswald, and therefore entitled to be where she was, and under the care of his father. No good—no simple heart can wish the death of any human being; but still, when it was said all over the parish that the stranger was dying, and that it was understood she did not wish to live, as she had never been happy with her husband, there was an universal hope that Margaret Lyndsay might yet be restored to peace and respectability as the wife of Ludovic Oswald. All was dimness, obscurity, and uncertain fear; but their minds dived through the future, and saw happiness at a distance both at the Manse and Nether-Place.

Hannah Blantyre became weaker and weaker every day, and so attenuated, that when she strove to turn herself in her bed, the very skin cracked over her bones. Yet still she retained that eager and bold spirit

that she had received from Nature, and that had been strengthened by the courses of a miserable and desperate life. Her large black eyes yet kept their lustre, and, weak as she was, she spoke whenever she was permitted with animation and earnestness about her boy. Of her husband she spoke without any bitterness, but as of one in whose affections she had long ceased to have any place. Notwithstanding her hopeless situation, and all their deadly quarrels, she still thought of him with pride; that feeling, perhaps, had inextinguished love below it; for not unfrequently she kept looking on her boy with tears, and she had a mournful pleasure in calling him by his name "Ludovic," as if that name stirred up thoughts and remembrances that were deep sunk, but not buried in her bosom. But the fever burned away slowly and surely on; and, although her eyes were clear, and her voice not unsteady, and her face, when all her figure was covered up, not like the face of death, yet the least skilful and experienced in mortal malady knew that the emaciated body must, in a very few days, lie perfectly quiet on its now restless bed.

Mr Oswald and Margaret sat at last by her death-bed, for so it turned out to be, although that day she had seemed somewhat stronger, and not the slightest wandering of mind had been observable. Mr Oswald had quieted, as far as he dared to do so, her many apprehensions of a future life that had, within a few days, come darkly and dimly over her spirit. Although her

guilty husband was his own son, he did not fear to charge him with his sins, and to tell the dying woman that she had been hardly used by a fellow-creature in this world. "My daughter, you were tempted by my son; and you and he fell into sin—more sinful he than thou! Dissension, distrust, and jealousy, embittered your wedded lives; and anger and wrath at last divided them. But the child loves its mother—see how, with its little hands, it plays with yours, and smiles into your face! Whatever may have been your own errors, you have respected nature in this infant, and it loves its loving mother. Oh! Hannah—the heart of Ludovic's father turns towards thee; and I now say that thou hast been more sinned against than sinning, and mayest trust in Him in whom alone we can trust, that thine may be the kingdom of Heaven."

Margaret Lyndsay was sitting at the foot of the bed—nor did her own miserable woe render her callous to the sight of the dying woman. She went up to her with a cordial in her hand, and said, "Will you take this from me—perhaps it will do you good?" The poor creature took the cup with a faint smile, and Margaret raised her head from the pillow, while she drank the cooling and reviving draught. "We are not enemies," said Hannah. "No—no—we are friends—and when I am dead—and Ludovic comes back—then will you be man and wife, with no one to separate you as I have done!"—"Hannah—you may leave this world before me, but I shall not tarry here

long after. Ludovic Oswald has both our prayers—Oh! —say with me—' May God forgive him all his transgressions!' "—" I have said that prayer many thousand times—and it shall be my last—' May God forgive my Ludovic!'—Oh! friends, what is this—where are you—let me hear you speak! Put my boy into my bosom!"

Margaret lifted up little Ludovic on the bed, and he of his own accord crept close to his mother's breast. She feebly folded her thin arms about her child,—with a convulsive motion drew his little rosy lips to hers,—and with several long deep gasps, sighed out her life upon the cheeks which her dying spirit knew to be the innocent image of those of her guilty husband.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Mr Oswald carried the head of Hannah Blantyre to the grave; and as she had been his son's wife, he did not bury her according to the wish of her disconsolate and remorseful heart, in a remote corner, damp and weedy, but on the same slope where the dead of his own family reposed. No stone was raised, but the decent heap, as soon as the winter-snow melted away, would be covered in its verdure with primroses and daisies, and visited by the cheerful sunshine. Margaret Lyndsay had taken a look at the grave; and although she was resigned to the will of God, perhaps she envied the rest of that bed, and would have fain shut her eyes in the darkness of the narrow chamber. But such delusive dreams of melancholy soon pass away; for the soul within us remembers that it never can die,—and that this life is but a portion of the awful life to come. It therefore turns away from the dust; and thinking on its duties and obligations, which can never be annulled, it draws near unto living humanity, and yearns again for the light of smiles, however dim, and for the

sound of voices, however plaintive. Margaret had not suffered her heart wholly to die within her,—love still dwelt there for others sorrows, terrible as had been her own; and when Lucy came over one night to Nether Place, and said, "Oh! Margaret, come with me, for my father's mind is troubled more than he can well bear," she accompanied her dear friend to the Manse, and promised to stay a few weeks there till Mr Oswald might become more composed, and be again fit to be seen, and able to go to church.

The truth was, that Mr Oswald, on the first blow of this calamity, fearing that it might utterly kill Margaret, had so delivered up his whole feelings to her alone, and her most pitiable condition, that he had, in a great measure, excluded from his heart many gnawing thoughts about his most miserable son. The guilt was black and cruel, and its victim was before the eyes of the criminal's father, in all her beauty, innocence, helplessness, and desertion. Anger even hardened Mr Oswald's heart against his son; and when anger could not sustain itself, moral indignation came to his aid. A demand was made on all the tenderness and love and pity in his nature, by the uncomplaining and resigned sadness of her most forlorn; and, as if it were all necessary to hold up her head from the bed of sickness and death, he gave it all, and was still unsatisfied with the measure of his own bounty. When he saw her ministering to the dying woman, who had so fatally changed to her all the appearances and realities of this world, the

sense of her Christian goodness was sublime and sup
porting; and in the fervour of her prayers for the poo
creature, often unable to pray for herself, Mr Oswald ha
felt his whole being strengthened against the assault
his own sorrows. But, after the funeral of Hann
Blantyre, the Manse was once more silent and quiet
Margaret Lyndsay was not there—and then Ludovi
voice was heard in his father's sleeping and waki
dreams—and sadness, horror, and despair, at last
upon the old man, and he would sit still for hours
keep walking about the house from room to ro
without any object, and weeping like a child. I
Lucy was unable to bear such a sight, and had, th
fore, beseeched Margaret, who needed no beseech
to come and live for a while at the Manse.

Her very presence produced a change upon Mr
wald. When she and Lucy were seen by his sunk
hollow eyes, sitting quite happy together, at lea
they seemed, his thoughts were prevented by that s
so powerful in its beauty, from running into hor
dreams of Ludovic's present or future lot. Margar
lieved that Ludovic had gone away to some fo
country; but she hoped and believed that his life w
be spared. That belief supported her; for ha
known that misery had killed him, her love wa
great to have borne such knowledge. Sometim
told her father not utterly to despair of seeing h
again—that he had long mourned him formerly a
that was dead—but that he had once returned, and

do so once more. Sad conversations were these to hold; but the very communion of fear and hope and love, alike inextinguishable in all their hearts, imparted, day by day, additional tranquillity to the sufferers. In a short time, Mr Oswald grew less restless and agitated, and began to speak of returning to the discharge of his sacred functions.

According as Margaret saw her father's mind more composed, did her own placid resignation become more stedfast. In her lonely room at Nether-Place, with none to comfort her but that affectionate domestic, whose heart was almost broken by such misery, she had often given way to despair, and almost forgotten both mercy and judgment. Such solitude would soon have killed her; and, indeed, a few weeks had seemed to add more than as many years to her age. But in the Manse, cheering and being cheered, kneeling down morning and evening with them who partook all in one love and one affliction, and never left unguarded against the temptations of sorrow, she wondered how she could yet feel so much desire of life! As her heart became less sad, it grew more and more hopeful; and at last she almost dared to pray that God would send her husband back to her bosom. For her husband he might yet be—false and wicked no more—and in her heart neither could her own wrongs nor his sins destroy or impair love strong as life. With a sick shudder of hopelessness would she sometimes turn away from such vain dreams. But still

they rose and disappeared; and, whether she strove against them or not, they came upon her in the darkness of solitary midnight, and sometimes in the meridian brightness of the companioned day. "Oh! Margaret! where, where is our Ludovic at this moment? If I knew that, my soul might find rest!" And to such passionate starts of paternal affection Margaret could often make no other reply but sighs and tears.

The frost and snow had almost all melted away under a few days' thaw, and very early in the year there was something like a soft vernal feeling in the sunshine that lighted up the Sabbath, on which Mr Oswald was, for the first time after his affliction, to meet his congregation. The Kirk was only a few hundred yards from the Manse, and as it had been known over all the parish that their own venerated minister was to appear again in his pulpit—Mr Oswald, who had been standing for some minutes at the window of his study, saw hundreds of his worthy friends, young and old, collecting together—many from the farthest uplands. The bell began to ring—and when the time came that he was to walk towards the kirk his heart almost failed within him; but Margaret and Lucy were in the parlour, and their faces restored his resolution. As they entered the little gate of the church-yard, the Elder at the plate, a very old man, took his Minister by the hand; and in a low voice, and few words, called down "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," on his head, and on the

heads of all his children. As their minister passed on —affection, pity, gratitude, and veneration regarded him from every side, with such looks as made his heart strong as a rock. The bell ceased, and Mr Oswald's white hairs were once more seen in the House of God. He sat for a little while in the pulpit, looking around him with a benign countenance—and many were the wet eyes eagerly fixed upon him as he arose, and with a clear and steady voice said, "Let us worship God, by singing to his praise the fourth Psalm from the beginning.

'Give ear unto me when I call,
God of my righteousness;
Have mercy, hear my prayer; thou hast
Enlarg'd me in distress,'" &c.

The sweet voice of Margaret Lyndsay, who on this Sabbath sat beside her sister in her father's seat, was heard in the Psalm. She did not veil her face, nor hang down her head, but she sat there meekly and humbly; and rude and simple as that country congregation was, not an eye was turned upon her in the stare of unfeeling curiosity, but the worship of God went on undisturbed as on ordinary occasions. Margaret stood up with the rest during the time of prayer—and her face was then, no doubt, seen by many—but a face so pale, so sad, so resigned, so faded, and so beautiful, touched every one who looked with a feeling that almost made them turn away their eyes, or put up their

hands to wipe away their tears. As Mr Oswald felt strongly the holy influence of the place, and of the worship, his soul threw off all lingering weakness, and he kindled into even more than his usual simple and fervent eloquence. So at least his congregation thought, for their hearts were full, and gave meanings to every word.

In his concluding prayer, he did not fear to trust himself, standing up publicly before God, with a supplication for his son. Then, indeed, the father's voice faltered,—his countenance changed,—the tears were seen falling down big and fast over his furrowed cheeks—and he stopped for a little while in the prayer. There was a deep hush—and Margaret Lyndsay sat down with many audible sobbings. But the old man soon found utterance for his love—and he called upon the Intercessor, that the soul of his son might not be suffered to perish. At these words Margaret rose up, half leaning on her sister Lucy, and had strength to continue so all the time of prayer.

Divine worship was over, and the congregation dismissed. Margaret Lyndsay walked slowly with Lucy out of the church-yard; and even stopped to address more than one of her scholars—and their parents. But no one advanced to meet her of their own accord, or sought to attract her notice. For they all felt awed by the solemnity of Mr Oswald's prayer, and by her own sacred resignation. They stood aloof in that reverent

feeling, which the sight of great distress greatly endured awakens in every good heart; nor did Margaret Lyndsay misunderstand their behaviour. It was a relief to her swelling heart to see such kindness prevailing over the whole congregation; above all, she rejoiced in the strength of Mr Oswald's spirit, for which she had now no longer any dismal fears; and followed by blessings, the father and his daughters returned to the Manse, which they did not again leave that Sabbath—for Mr Oswald had made a great exertion, and his elders respectfully insisted on there being no afternoon sermon. That determination was soon known to the congregation—some continuing to sit in the kirk—some standing in the sunniest part of the church-yard—some taking refreshment in the small village public-house—some in the cottages of friends, and some strolling down the little dells, till they should again hear the bell—while a few families, who lived most remote, had, immediately after service, set out on their homeward journey.

CHAPTER XLV.

From that day, as if a promise of peace had descended from heaven into Mr Oswald's spirit, was he gradually restored almost to his former self; and before Spring Margaret Lyndsay returned to live at Nether-Place. She visited her father and sister every day; and meeting with all her former friends, sometimes on her walks to the Manse, and every Sabbath at church, she once more had heartfelt satisfaction in their presence. No doubt, a deep and incurable wound was in her bosom; and never again could she enjoy that deep delight in life which had been hers for so many years. A new existence, too, had inclosed her for a few short months, when she slept on the breast of Ludovic Oswald, believing him a man truly penitent for past sins, and thenceforth disposed to walk before God all his days. That blessed dream was gone for ever; but still Margaret could have been happy, deserted as she was, and also disgraced, (although the disgrace before man was felt to be but of short duration,) could she have but known that Ludo-

vic was not dead—nor yet very wretched. But the utter darkness in which his life or death was hidden, it was hard to think of in her solitude; and sometimes when she suffered herself to meditate on all the possibilities of his doom, in spite of religion she was like one distracted, and shut her Bible with a groan of unmitigable agony—agony that feared not so to give itself vent, even to the known displeasure of God.

We say that the wretched are forgetting their wretchedness when they are seen mingling again with their fellow-creatures—taking some part in the concerns of life—speaking as they used to do—smiling—laughing even—and seeking indulgence in human emotions. But how little do we know rightly of one another's inner life! One single solitary hour witnessed accidentally—one confidential letter to a bosom friend perused—one confession wrung out by a sudden pang—one melancholy tear that glistens for the irredeemable past—can change our opinion of the state of a fellow-creature, and render him all at once in our eyes an object of the most affecting interest, who had long been regarded perhaps with dislike or indifference. Margaret Lyndsay's appearance was such that almost every one in the parish thought that she was nearly as happy as ever. But it is well that we cannot penetrate into each other's hearts. Resigned as she was, and perfectly submissive to her Maker, except in short paroxysms of despair, Margaret Lyndsay, in her deplorable widowhood, was often sick of the burthen of

life; and having lost all her natural cheerfulness, she was herself sensible of sinking deeper and deeper every day into a settled melancholy.

This decline, however, both of body and mind, was so gradual, that it did not attract the notice even of Mr Oswald or Lucy. On the contrary, they both mistook Margaret's more still and noiseless demeanour for more perfect placidity, and believed that she had finally found rest. But poor old Mysie, who had no sufferings of her own to blind her, and no other human being in this world to care for but her young mistress, saw with other eyes, and knew that grief was sending Margaret Lyndsay towards the grave. Often, often the kind creature spoke without being heard; and sometimes Margaret forgot altogether that she was in the room, and vented such sighs—or perhaps a word or two—as pierced her to the heart. Mysie dreaded that her mistress was in a consumption; and in that fear she contrived to write a letter, not very legible, and no doubt strangely spelt, to Miss Wedderburne. That excellent young lady had been lately relieved from the labours of love to her parent. Mrs Wedderburne was dead; and Margaret's first friend and benefactress being now able to leave home, lost no time after receiving Mysie's letter in going to Nether-Place. She had known all that had happened—but no friendship can call away a good daughter from the bedside of a dying mother.

Miss Wedderburne did more good to her unfortu-

nate friend than all the physicians in the world could have done; for she diffused the healing of peace through every vein, and into her very heart. That heart had begun to stagnate in solitary sorrow; its beatings had gone on within a bosom indifferent to life; and the disease finding itself unopposed, had gained ground every day, and ere long would have been beyond the reach of human skill. But now Margaret Lyndsay felt as if warmed by the sunshine, and refreshed with the balmy breezes of former days, when all her tears had been for others—none for herself—when, if she lay down in grief she rose up in joy, and was even happy in spite of her own tender and pitying soul, and of all the severest dispensations of Providence. Remembering what she once had been, she began to think what she might yet be! It was Miss Wedderburne, who had instructed her mind and her heart—had raised her out of ignorance and poverty and hardship—and opened her eyes clearer and farther on into the nature of this life. Once more that benefactress was at her side! With her own hands did she dry up the tears of one who had long been an orphan, and was now worse than a widow; and in a few days, Mysie, who humbly kept at her own occupations, but who watched her mistress with keenly observant eyes almost every hour, began to hum cheerfully at her work, and attributed the preservation of Margaret's life to the beautiful lady from Edinburgh.

Margaret feared every day that Miss Wedderburne

would be bidding her farewell; but instead of that she proposed sending for Harriet and Frances to Nether-Place. "If you do that—and my dear girls come to see me, I care not if, when you all go away together, that hour be my last."—"Nay, nay—my beloved Margaret—you must not speak so—the future is indeed dark—but God has never forsaken you in any of your trials. Will you write to Harriet and Frances yourself, and I will add a postscript, and address your letter?" In short, the two young, affectionate, and grateful girls lost no time in coming to Nether-Place; and, on the night of their arrival, when Margaret Lyndsay went into their room, after they had gone to bed, as she had always done when she had charge of them of old, and kissed their cheeks, she almost forgot her miseries, and shed tears of happiness. That night she fell asleep in the fulness of quiet joy—and with no ghastly dreams that she could remember, she rose in the morning incapable of misery, and touched with something like the gladness of her light-hearted youth. For, although she had yet seen only her twenty-second summer, she often thought, on recounting to herself all the sorrows she had seen and suffered, that her life must have been a long one—and sometimes she even felt old in the languor and exhaustion of her whole being. But now Miss Wedderburne, Harriet, and Frances, would not let her be miserable; and she sometimes even upbraidingly asked herself how she could thus forget Ludovic Oswald? Never, never did

she forget him; but she was forced to reap the fruit of her own innocence and piety; and God and nature had brought her three beautiful and delightful comforters, before the light of whose smiles, and the music of whose voices, despondency and despair could not live, but died away like the phantasms of feverish sleep.

Margaret Lyndsay had not a heart in which friendships alternated, displacing each other according to a power given to them by circumstances; but affection once implanted there, lived on and grew for ever. She took Miss Wedderburne, Harriet, and Frances to the Manse—and deep and strong common feelings at once united all there together in a sure love. There was nothing vain—fantastic—morbid—extravagant—or flighty in their affection. It rose out of the best emotions of their nature; and each loved the other as well, at first sight, as if they had been sisters meeting after separation from earliest infancy, and one father embracing them all in his arms. Mr Oswald felt even a pride in Margaret,—although it might have been thought that such a feeling could not soon have risen up among so many sad recollections—when he saw how tenderly and respectfully she was treated by such a woman as Miss Wedderburne, and how enthusiastically she was beloved by Harriet and Frances. While simple Lucy, to whom all jealousy was unknown, was lavish of her admiration—but still

thought that not one of them all was equal to Margaret Lyndsay.

To raise up Margaret's heart to a still happier composure, letters came from Laurence now in the Indian Seas. He was well, and full of animating hopes. Thus entrenched among the holiest feelings of nature, she looked, and indeed was—happy; her thoughts of Ludovic were, without any effort of her mind, less and less appalling—and it did not now seem so wild and mad a thing to hope that he might return. "If he be alive, he will hear about me some day!"—And then Margaret knew well that he loved her, which he indeed did with all his miserable heart, and that knowledge of itself was strength. But then, "what if he be dead—and year after year waste away till I go to the grave without hearing one word about my Ludovic! Or, alas! what if I some day know that he is dead! And something that belonged to him be brought to prove that the corpse was that of my beloved husband!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

About midsummer Margaret lost her friends, who parted from her with that reluctance which kind hearts feel to leave a dear object, to whom they know full well that their presence is a blessing. But their own duties called them away; and Margaret gave them a promise to visit them in Edinburgh towards the close of autumn. She longed to take a look at Braehead, and to walk down the lane where her mother and sisters died. Her life there had not faded from her remembrance, although all its scenes of happiness or distress were softened in the distance; and with difficulty could she sometimes believe that she was the same person with the girl who, in the midst of all her trials, had fallen asleep the moment she laid herself down on her chaff bed, and felt cheerful in the morning light, notwithstanding all the deaths that had taken away, one by one, all whom she loved. Nether-Place was again solitary; and, although for some time after the departure of Miss Wedderburne and her sweet sisters, it was also most melancholy, yet Margaret felt that the

influence of that affection remained, and that she was now far stronger in mind and heart than before, and secured against the assaults, if not of despondency, certainly of despair.

Nether-Place was, by its situation, most retired; and the few footpaths that had crept up during the lapse of years through the farm, from adjacent houses, had, by common consent of the inhabitants, fallen into disuse since Margaret's extraordinary affliction. No person walked by the house in idleness; and few that could well help it, even on business. The summer was an exceedingly rich one, and the foliage of the trees broad, deep, and dark. Many glimpses of the country round about were excluded—the avenue was as dim in the middle of the day as it had formerly been towards the evening; and the black cloud of crows that kept wheeling about the old elm-grove was almost the only motion or sound about Nether-Place. Margaret Lyndsay, in her blighted but beautiful youth, led as recluse a life as Daniel Craig had done; but in that seclusion she did not forget her fellow-creatures in distress. Charity dwelt in that solitude; and some who now saw her face only on the Sabbath day, felt her goodness all the week through; and on blessing the bread she gave, implored God to be with her in her exceeding great affliction. She was not buried in grief—her heart was alive as ever—and had she not done so much good her resignation had not been so complete; for God had given her the means of bene-

fiting her fellow-creatures, and, in employing them, she unconsciously solaced her own griefs. She did all the good she could—and that made her happy.

She was sitting one warm still evening, just about sunset, in the Willow-Arbour, when she saw Michael Grahame approaching. She was happy, indeed, to receive a visit from one who she feared had been too ill to leave home, and took his hand with the pressure of sisterly affection. Sometimes it had crossed her mind that Michael had once loved her too tenderly, and that her marriage must have made him sad. There was more than even Christian regard for her happiness expressed by his melancholy voice on that night when she had told him of her love for Ludovic Oswald; and, during the few months they had lived together, he had not once come to Nether-Place. Neither had he done so since the miserable event, although she knew from Mr Oswald that he had made constant inquiries about her welfare; sometimes at the Manse, and always when visited at Lamington Braes. Margaret now was much afflicted by seeing him so like a shadow; for slow consumption had been at its work for a year nearly, since last she saw him, and Michael Grahame was manifestly marked out for his grave before the leaves, now green, should be yellow in the tinge of autumn.

They sat down in the arbour; and, no doubt, they both remembered well the last time they had sat there, and all their conversation. Michael took her hand

now into his, with that privilege which a dying man feels towards a friend most tenderly beloved. Margaret felt tears rushing in; for she had loved Michael Grahame always; and now her affection for him was deepened and sanctified by the fear of death. She held his warm and feverish hand in both of hers; she kept her tearful eyes fixed affectionately upon his face; and, when he raised up her arm to his lips and kissed it, she took it not away—but quieted the soul of him who knew his days were nearly numbered by every tenderest expression of spiritual love. She knew well to whom she was speaking, looking, sighing, weeping; and there was no reason why she should not soothe the soul of the dying man.

"Margaret, you have been the greatest blessing of my short life. Till I became your friend, I knew nothing—except in imagination—of the nature of a woman's soul. Your purity—piety—and sinlessness—if such a word may be used of a human being—have made me almost fearless of death. Thinking of you, I know the soul to be immortal." Margaret looked at him almost with a disturbed countenance; but she could say nothing—for a hectic flush was on his cheeks, and his eyes burned with the fire of that fatal disease. "Oh Michael, Michael, your words are not fitting for me to hear, kind as they are; for I am, in truth, a sinful creature—full of frailties—and oppressed with grief. But let us not sit longer here—for warm as the summer days are, the evenings are often

cold, and you are not in a condition to stand the chill air." But the youth rose not—and Margaret continued sitting by his side. "Margaret Lyndsay, I once loved you—as dust loves dust—and no heaven could I think of but that of your breast. You saw me a lonely—sickly—silent man—nor thought when I came into your presence, or when I left it; but I cared not; I knew I was not to live long, and bliss enough it was for me to hear you speak—to see you smile on others—and sometimes, too, on me—for you were always gentle to me, and every word you ever spoke do I remember now, and will I remember till the clay is upon my lips. Do not weep, Margaret—for hopeless—desperate—and even impious as my love was, still I was happy. Had it not been for my love, I should have been dead ere this, of very weariness of heart, worn out by incessant pain, and a sickness that only the consumptive know."

Margaret knew well that it was a dying man who thus spoke to her; and she felt that it would be cruel to stop his words. She therefore sought to inspire him with more cheerful thoughts about himself, and varying their conversation, to assure him that many a one as far gone in consumption as he was had recovered, and lived for many long years. "I do not wish it—I am nearly prepared to die—many agitating fears have I passed through—doubts and perplexities—and sore distress of the baffled understanding—but now I believe—and when my hour comes I shall die in

Christ." He looked so faint—so destitute of all strength—so utterly languid, that Margaret feared her friend would die that very hour, and an awful sympathy came over her spirit. "Oh! Margaret Lyndsay—my beautiful and my beloved—will you hear words of comfort from my lips? Methinks I see into the future—and that happiness is yet in store for you. Ludovic Oswald will return—it is my clear and deep conviction that he will—and he and you, as husband and wife, will yet be happy. Oh! that I could see you reunited—and then be released." A sacred fervour kindled his speech—and he kissed Margaret's forehead. "Thou art my sister—and I may yet kiss that angelical brow in heaven. I cannot get rid of earthly ties yet—I cannot be insensible, while I breathe, of thy beauty—Oh! give me one lock of that soft, bright, auburn hair, that I may have it with me in my coffin. Will you give it to me, Margaret?—it is my first and last request." Margaret Lyndsay gave it to him—and with hands all covered over with blue veins, and little more than bones, Michael Grahame put the tress into his bosom, over which, in a few weeks, was to be drawn the winding-sheet. "Margaret! that was an earthly thought—an earthly request. But I am yet under the dominion of the dust, —and even this little lock of hair will comfort me when I may be lying on my death-bed in my poor mother's house. She is a simple, uneducated woman, and in her solitariness will sorely miss me who have long

been her only joy—her only grief. Need I say that, when I am gone, I hope you will pay a visit now and then to the widow and the childless; and, as you cross Lamington Braes, think of your friend Michael Grahame. Here, Margaret, is a keepsake—the Bible that I have carried about with me for several years. I have written a few words on a blank page. If ever you and Ludovic Oswald are married, read to your husband from this Bible." Margaret took the Bible from his hand, and wet it with her tears; but Mr Oswald was now seen approaching, and she felt herself relieved from an almost insupportable weight of mournful emotions. Michael Grahame, too, at sight of his venerable friend, recovered his composure, and saluted him with his customary gentle manner. Mr Oswald had not seen Michael for a good many weeks, and could with difficulty hide his feelings on the great visible change.

They sat silent for a while, till Michael Grahame again began to speak on the subject nearest and dearest to his lingering spirit. Mr Oswald, under the power of his voice, sat enchained like a very child, and heard every word of hope about his son Ludovic with a credulous heart. "I know that your son, with all his sins, would not destroy himself. No—no—never—never. He is alive at this moment somewhere,—and, in God's good time, will return a penitent, and you will all yet be happy. I seem to have a prophetic intimation of his return." Mr Oswald looked atten-

tively on the poor youth, and he saw that he was under the influence of fever—not such a fever as confuses and clouds the brain, but excites all internal perceptions into an extraordinary degree of vividness. But still he knew not how to hush a conversation so painfully affecting to them all; when footsteps were heard coming along the gravel-walk, and a man, in part dressed like a soldier, stood beside them, and, pulling off his hat, took a letter out of it, and gave it to Mr Oswald. "A forced march—thirty-three miles in a hot summer-day—Please, Sir, or Madam—to wet my whistle a bit or so. I want a couple of toes on the right foot forwards—frost-bitten in that damned Holland.—Beg your pardon, Sir, for swearing; but I am as thirsty as the devil himself." The messenger saw that he had brought strong tidings, and, abruptly turning about, walked towards the house. Mr Oswald let the letter drop out of his hand, and Margaret, suddenly struck with a dreadful hope, seized it, and had sight enough to know the hand-writing of him so long wept over, and bewailed as dead, or worse than dead. "It is from my husband—from my Ludovic—from your son!"—And with these words, she lay down upon her father's bosom.

Michael Grahame took the letter, and asked if he should read it, and tell them what it contained? He did so; and they now knew that Ludovic, who thought himself at the point of death, was lying, at Edinburgh, in an Hospital.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Mr Oswald and Margaret arrived in Edinburgh on the forenoon of the day after they had received Ludovic's letter; and, first of all, they went to the house of Miss Wedderburne. With a joyful countenance did she welcome them; nor, in her earnest embrace, was she aware of the sore agitation that shook and convulsed the frame of her beloved friend. But few words were necessary to explain all that was yet known; and then they sat down in strong suspense of emotion, one and all of them awed by the hope and fear that were soon to be changed either into bliss or misery. Both Mr Oswald and Margaret were, however, much cheered by the deep sympathy expressed by so excellent a person in their present trial, and agreed to take the refreshment which, after so troubled and sleepless a night, and so long and dismal a journey, was requisite both for body and soul. Indeed, they were afraid to go to the melancholy place where they knew one so dear was lying; and Margaret, although long accustomed to sorrow, was so overpowered, that her frame was unable

to support itself, and she lay down on the sofa, almost in the bosom of her friend. "My brother Richard is in the house," said Miss Wedderburne;—"allow him to go first and inquire about the patient. To see you restored to each other will be indeed to him a delightful sight." Margaret was thinking too mournfully of Ludovic to feel almost any emotion at the name of her former lover; but still she looked as if it must not be that he should interest himself so in such a crisis. Miss Wedderburne observed her delicacy, even in her utmost distress, and whispered to her, "Richard is quite happy now. He esteems—admires—venerates—loves you still; but, thank God, all his griefs are at an end, and he is in no long time to be married to one almost as worthy of him as my own Margaret." These words were a relief to vague apprehensions passing through her heart; and in a few minutes Margaret sat up stronger and more composed; and when Richard Wedderburne entered the room, received him as a friend who possessed, indeed, her utmost regard and sisterly affection. He heard the sad tale with manifest agitation, and offered his services with all the warmth of his generous nature. But Mr Oswald and Margaret felt that there must be no witnesses at such a meeting; so did their friends; and now they left the house, promising to return as soon as possible, whatever might be the event, and walked along the busy streets to the Infirmary.

They had both made up their hearts for the worst, as

far as human hearts, that, by their constitution, live on the breath of hope, can ever be made up to the certain conviction of evil yet unknown. The grey melancholy walls of the building, that contained so much sickness, sorrow, and decay, almost struck still the beatings of their pulse, when they entered within the gates of the court. The silence of the gloom was so deathlike, and such a general sadness on the faces of the few persons moving about from door to door, as if going from one dying bed to another. Mr Oswald was making some inquiries, confused and indistinct, in the agitation of a father's love, when an old matron said,—"Follow me—you have been looked for—you are Mr Oswald?" She conducted them into a small room—almost a closet—and told them to sit down for a few minutes. They had not had time to speak a word of comfort to each other, when the door again opened, and a gentleman advanced in life, and with a countenance remarkably mild and benignant, came in, saying with a smile, "Mr Oswald—your son will recover—I do not doubt it—all the worst symptoms are gone." Margaret was still sitting—and all she did was to bless God for his infinite mercy, in such a voice as greatly affected the humane physician, accustomed as he had been for so many years to ejaculations both of grateful thanksgiving and hopeless agony. "Your poor son has told me much of his story—he made me his confessor last night—and he has been removed to a room by himself, where you will find him better, I

dare say, than you expected." They followed their kind conductor, and gently opening a door at the end of a long silent passage, he bade them enter, and then went away, saying he would return in an hour.

Silently, as if walking in their sleep, Mr Oswald and Margaret put down their feet upon that floor, and they saw lying upon a bed one whom they could not have known to be their beloved Ludovic. He was supported upon pillows, so that the figure seemed to be nearly sitting up; and the eyes were closed as if it had been in death. He was not aware of an approach so noiseless; nor would he have heard even a heavy tread, for his soul had been wearied and worn-out within him, by long endurance of pain, and especially by a wakeful night, in which he had lain, wondering when his father came what would be his reception of so profligate a son. A chair was at the bedside near his head, and on it his father sat down, while Margaret, afraid to disturb the sleeper, took her seat at his feet. There he lay, with no blood in his face—his cheeks sunk, and his lips white, and his arms laid by his side just like a corpse. But he breathed hardly, and that was the only symptom of life. . . . . .

What a change was here, from that gay and gallant youth that, a year ago, in spite of all his wounds, was straight and stately, and had walked with the proud step of one who had been familiar with danger, and had led on brave spirits like himself in many a desperate enterprise! He was now feebler than a child—

subdued by misery—utterly helpless—and unable, had the place been on fire, to rise up and escape from destruction. Frost and cold, and hunger and thirst, and weary marches, and fierce onsets, had once been as nothing to Ludovic Oswald; but now sap and leaves were dried up and withered, and the trunk lying on the ground decayed and eaten in unto the very core. "Oh! my son—my son!" was all his father could articulate; while she who had been his bride—his wife—could not look upon so sad a sight, and bowed down her head upon her lap, hiding her face with her hands, through which streamed in a torrent most bitter and rueful tears.

They sat thus long—very long—and uttered not a word. Yet they both tried to comfort themselves with the cheering intimation of that benevolent physician, and hoped, in spite of what they saw, that the figure might yet arise, and that the powers of life were not utterly decayed. His father sat looking at him with his hands clasped, and his eyes frequently raised to heaven. Then would he gaze vacantly about the room, where every thing was clean—orderly—and comfortable for the sick. No disturbing sound reached the chamber—no glaring light found its way through the curtains that darkened the window. Skill and humanity watched over the sick-room; but could they exclude death? Had his father and his wife been paying their last visit to the body forsaken by the soul, they could not have sat there in profounder silence,

nor seemingly more remote from hope. But there was hope, nevertheless, and they both saw the motion of his breast stirring the white sheet with which it was so decently covered.

The sick man now awoke, and opened his dim eyes, but they were fixed on vacancy, and saw nothing. His slumbers gradually dispersed; and at length he seemed to behold the figure at his feet. "My good nurse, will you give me that cup?" And at these words Margaret rose up, and stood fully before his soul. He knew her in a moment, and as he closed his eyes, pronounced her name. "Ludovic, Ludovic," said his father, "I and your own Margaret are both here—you sent for me, and I have come—nor would she whom once I thought I had for ever made your wife stay away—Oh! my dear boy, let me hear your voice. Blessed be God that I have seen this day—and that my first-born is yet alive!"

There were meek and tender embracings—tears shed that themselves knew not of—prayers silent in their hearts, and uttered in single words—sighs of love and forgiveness, and gratitude—groans of penitence, remorse, and despair. "Oh! father, I have sinned against thee, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son! And have you come, indeed, Margaret, to the dying bed of that miserable sinner, who brought you to shame and ruin!"—"There was no shame, my Ludovic, with me, for God never forsook me. But where—where have you been this long long year?—

and, alas! what cruel sufferings have brought you to such a place as this?"—"Will you kiss me, Margaret—once only—in presence of our father—before I am called away to judgment?" Margaret knelt down, and leant over him—and kissed his brow often and often, and called him by every tender name that love could remember, names familiar to his ear during those few months when she had lain in delusion within his selfish and deceitful bosom. Margaret doubted not that he was a dying man, and strove in all the power of sacred affection to comfort the spirit which was about to pass away from earth.

"I am weak and faint, and cannot speak—but tell me, I beseech you, how you have been since that day on which I left you, in guilt, shame and despair?"—Margaret, who was now more composed than his father, told him that they had both been resigned and happy—and that, had they known where he had gone, or if he were alive, that they would have been contented with their lot. She also told him of Hannah Blantyre's death, and of the welfare of his little boy, now in the Manse. All was strange—humiliating—miserable to this guilty man. "Poor Hannah, then, is dead!—But, Margaret, she was false to me—and that may be some alleviation of my guilt."—"Ludovic, your wife is in her grave—your father and I saw her die—and, whatever may have been her sins, in this I believe her innocent. But, Oh! Ludovic, what thoughts are these, that now they should be

spoken of! I came here to comfort and bring peace. I was your wife once—but all earthly ties are now as nothing—and I devoutly trust that now you have a new heart." The dying man, for such he seemed to be, strove to hide his face, but he could not—for his feeble arm again fell down motionless by his side. "I have been in Jamaica—and was wounded fighting in the woods against the Maroons. Sent home and discharged—for I was a private soldier as before.—I came down to Edinburgh, and found myself, I do not know how, in the Infirmary. I hope that I have repented—but Oh! I do not feel that I am pardoned—for God does not hear my prayers!—Pray for me, Margaret—pray for me, father—and then I may trust in the mercy of Heaven."

They both knelt down by the bed-side, and his father prayed. Margaret held his emaciated hand in hers, and pressed it to her lips. Religion had been for too many years estranged from the heart of Ludovic Oswald. Even in his happiness he had not lived in obedience to her laws; and in his misery hers was a frowning face upon which he feared to look. But disease had tamed his soul, and opened it to that voice whose warnings had so long been despised. And now it was his own father who was praying—and whom he had ever loved with a holy fear. His fellow-creature had forgiven him; and that almost encouraged him to hope that he might receive forgiveness from his Creator.

But now the hour was gone, and the physician came into the room. Familiar as he had been from his youth with the most melancholy shows of life and death, his countenance now wore, with all its sincere pity and compassion, almost an air of cheerfulness; and that expression, contrasted although it was so strongly with that on the other faces, yet was not without comfort to all their hearts. "Come, come," said he, "we must not suffer my patient to take too much of this medicine, pleasant as it is. You must leave him for a few hours at least to himself—or to a very different nurse from your daughter, Sir; an old fat woman, fond of tea and a mountain of buttered toast, and who will sleep as soundly and snore as sonorously in that arm-chair yonder as a very trooper." So Mr Oswald took his son almost cheerfully by the hand, and said, "Ludovic, my dear son, keep up your heart—our friend here says you are in the fair way of recovery—and I do not fear in a fortnight to take you with me to the Manse." Margaret again kissed him with many tears, and whispered consoling words close to his cheek, so that a faint smile came across his face; and, when his father and Margaret again looked towards him, as they were leaving the room, he seemed to them both not nearly so death-like as an hour before, and they left him with hopes of his recovery so strong that they were afraid to feel them in their hearts, lest they might prove all false at last.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The punishment of guilt had fallen heavy on Ludovic Oswald, and remorse had been his companion night and day, on ship-board, in the tumult of soldiers' quarters, and on desperate service against savage men in the woods. His whole character had been broken up, and misery lived among its ruins. His love for Margaret Lyndsay had been deep and true, and he had, in order to possess her, madly broken oaths, and subjected her whole future life to probable ignominy and wretchedness. Even when she had lain in her innocence, beauty, and affection, within his bosom, remorse had gnawed at his heart, and even she, his lovely and loving bride, could not, with her soft bosom, appease the rage of that hungry fiend. But, on the very hour that his infatuated crime had been brought to light, and ruin stared them all in the face, he had been driven out from the home he had profaned with the audible curse of God ringing in his ears, and had striven to harden himself to self-destruction. But his nature recoiled from that hideous act, and he sailed as a soldier to the West Indies.

Often had he wished to write to his father, or to Margaret, but something always tore the pen out of his hand, and he feared to see their very names written down, after his horrid sacrilege. His guilt had been most unnatural, and inexpiable; and he saw no refuge but in shipwreck, or death in battle.

Every misery that man can endure of mind and body had been his; and when at last he had reached Edinburgh, that he might know something about his father and Margaret before he died, he had fallen down on the street, and after being looked at by many hundreds collecting and dispersing again without meddling with him in his squalid swoon, he had been finally carried to the Infirmary. He had lain for several weeks delirious or insensible. He had many wounds —imperfectly cured—and the yellow-fever had devoured his strength, that had once been able to cope, hand to hand, with the fiercest enemy. On recovering his reason, he tried in vain to hear something, however slight, of his friends at Casterton; and at last, thinking that he had but few days to live, he scrawled a short letter, and got a person almost as poor as himself to carry it to his father. That messenger knew Ludovic Oswald by another name, and so did the medical attendants. He lay in the common fever ward—but that was a comfortable and quiet place compared with many others in which he had been, and he was almost reconciled to die as an unknown pauper. One of the physicians, however, had frequently spoken

to him in a way that showed he suspected Ludovic be the son of a gentleman, and, on the evening af he had dispatched the letter to his father, the unf tunate man whispered to him what had been his bi and parentage—and what visit he hoped. In co quence of this, he had been removed into the r where that interview had taken place.

Every thing that skill and humanity could do been done to Ludovic in that hospital; but how c his father, or Margaret, or their friends, bear thoughts of his lying another night within its wa The weather was mild—warm—and almost withc breath of air; so in the evening the patient was la a litter, and carried, without disturbance or pai the house of Miss Wedderburne. There he was down on a bed of down, and in a room as silent he had been at Nether-Place. There his father Margaret could watch by his bed-side every l with nothing to impede, and every thing to for the ministration of devoted affection. Every fo the house touched the floors lightly as a leaf— bell was rung—and doors opened and shut unh A heavenly calm fell upon Ludovic's soul, a broken only by the voices of his father or his M ret, more deeply charged with tones of love than had never sinned, and been thus miserably br low by guilt! No doubt Margaret's face and both seemed changed to his eyes; but well d know that his own wickedness had made that

bosom pine away, and had even mixed the auburn of her hair with some threads of untimely grey. But although there were many symptoms of sorrow and suffering about his Margaret, there was not one of anger or unforgivingness; her looks, motions, smiles, tears, and words were all loving as loving might be, and told the dying man that her whole soul would go with him into his grave. Often did he fear to look towards his father's face—but his dim eyes turned of their own accord to Margaret—for there was no stern—no austere—no upbraiding expression on her countenance—nothing but a pale gentle smile that quieted even his apprehensions of a world to come.

On that night—after Ludovic had fallen asleep—his father and Margaret sat in the drawing-room almost cheerfully with Richard Wedderburne and his three sisters. The elegance of their whole demeanour was now made more delightful by the overflowing of compassion, pity, and love. To Margaret they behaved as they had always done, for she was one of themselves; but the delicacy of their attentions to Mr Oswald affected, and at the same time elevated her heart more than all their tenderness to herself; and in that compassionate respect to the white head of the aged Richard Wedderburne was now conspicuous. With what pure—profound—and tender gratitude did Margaret now look upon him who had once been her lover! And with what a calm and undisturbed eye did he regard her, now that time and reason had freed

him from vain and misplaced passion, and left him at liberty to admire and love still—the beautiful being who had so innocently distracted years of his life! The whole conversation, slightly varying in its mood, under the calm fluctuation of common feelings, still bore upon one happy yet melancholy subject; despondency and fear, as often as they arose, sank away beneath so many encouraging smiles and voices, and when Margaret retired to her bed-room, it was with a strong spirit of hope that entered into her prayers.

It was the same room in which she had slept during the most undisturbed part of her life, when snatched from poverty and obscure distress, she had been admitted into the very bosom of the most enlightened happiness, and made one of a family distinguished, in the possession of all temporal advantages, by every Christian virtue. She felt now enclosed by all peaceful thoughts; and along with softened remembrances of the past, came brighter hopes of the future. Within the walls of this one house were almost all she dearly loved, and they were all lying in silence and sleep. She looked from her window into the clear night, and those beautiful Meadows, where she had so often walked in joy with Frances and Harriet, were all reposing in the moonlight. Over the tops of the groves her heart sailed onwards to sweet Braehead, and saw a confused vision of that her early habitation. The dead were there alive, and voices heard that had for years been silent in the dust. Like the

songs of an angel swelling in the starry heaven, were now the remembered tones of blind Esther's voice, hymning beside her mother's knees. And love, which as well as fear, peoples the night with phantoms, brought the image of that mother close to her side, till she almost started to behold the visible presence of one who could now be embraced but in a dream. These were Margaret's waking thoughts before she lay down on the once accustomed bed; and they brightened into still more overwhelming bliss in the mysterious, incomprehensible, and incommunicable world of sleep.

Day after day Ludovic's appearance was less ghastly and deathlike—and no one now but himself had any doubts of his recovery. The same physician who had been so kind to him in the Infirmary attended him still, and assured Mr Oswald that his son might live many years, although he never could again enjoy strong health. But that assurance was enough to satisfy his father's heart, and to fill it with gratitude. Escaped at last from all the troubles of the world, his repentant son would become fitter for heaven, in the thoughtful progress of years, which he knew could not be very many; Nether-Place would yet be the abode of peace and tranquillity; and his own Manse be as happy as ever, when Ludovic and Margaret were again husband and wife. Such were the thoughts that occupied the old man's reviving heart; but he did not hint them to his son, for as yet Ludovic had no

hope of life, and preparation for death makes the days of them worth more who have unexpectedly received first reprieve and then a pardon.

His father and Margaret were sitting one evening as usual in his room, and comforting him in his despondency. "I do not wish to live—for after guilt like mine, it is impossible that even my father can forgive me, or love his son as before. Neither, Margaret, can you—Oh! never, never—love one who so inhumanly destroyed your peace. You pity me—I see that—for I am one of the wretched—but how can you ever love me any more? and without you, what would be this life? I hope that I shall die." Mr Oswald knew not all that might have passed through Margaret's thoughts in her widowhood. Such guilt as that of his son had struck at the holiest affections of her nature, and reduced her at once to an almost hopeless prostration. Had no anger—no indignation—no bitter and rankling sense of unspeakable injury penetrated her heart along with all its sufferings, and hardened it against her betrayer? Would she give her soul once more to that guilty and miserable man? Would she again leave the calm of resignation, and of a life divorced from agitating emotions, and become the wife of him in whose bosom she had found deceit even during that bridal happiness, which, with all human creatures, is held sacred and uncontaminated? But all such fears in a father's spirit were now to be done away, for Margaret knelt down by the bedside

and said, "My beloved Ludovic!—my life was suddenly and terribly darkened for your sake—but never did my love sink in all my struggles—in all my agonies. You think that you are on your death-bed, and perhaps it may be so, for we are all blind, and the decrees of God are unsearchable. But here am I—willing to be your wife once more, even if it be but for a few melancholy days—here am I, with a heart fuller of love than it was even on that day when your father pronounced his benediction over us! If you are to die, let your last breath be drawn on the bosom of me your wife—and let my days afterwards, which then will not be long, be passed as your widow—so that our names may be on one tombstone, and our bodies be interred side by side in hopes of a joyful resurrection!"

The pale and emaciated figure seemed animated with a stronger principle of hope; and tears, the first he had been able to weep, for anguish had dried them up, trickled down his cheeks. "Oh! Margaret, Margaret, was there ever love like unto this!—Father, you have heard her words. Once did I, your miserable son, suffer you to bestow on us a fatal benediction. I am still a sinner—nor is true penitence in my soul,—remorse alone tears it to pieces—But as I am now on the brink of the grave, will you, father, reunite us on earth, that we may, by the mercy of God and his Son, meet in Heaven?" Mr Oswald was happy to hear such humble words, and he knew that truth was then speaking

within the supposed shadow of death. "Yes, my son, I will make Margaret Lyndsay your wife on earth; and if you obey her pure and holy heart, you need not despair of seeing her in Heaven, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage—but to which mortal beings like us are led by the sanctity of earthly affections."

CHAPTER XLIX.

Mr Oswald did not return to his Manse till Margaret was his son's wife. They were sad but holy nuptials. Yet a tinge of joy irradiated the mournful ceremonial. Miss Wedderburne, Harriet, and Frances, laid aside their weeds for that one day, and put on white marriage garments. Lucy, of course, was not away; and Michael Grahame himself would have come, if he could—but his last weakness now kept him to his bed. He sent them his joyful blessing. Margaret, pale, thin, and weeping, stood by the bed of her husband, and held his hand, while his grey-haired father, with an unfaltering voice, once more joined their lives before Heaven. She stood there in the fulness of religious joy, for the soul of one who deemed himself on the verge of death was now given into her care to prepare it by love for earth or Heaven, for time or for eternity. Now she was Ludovic's wife again—and all her nature expanded in hope, that God would spare her husband, and allow him some

few years to prepare himself for that change so awful to all that are born.

Margaret had promised to visit Miss Wedderburne before the end of autumn, and thus affectingly and solemnly had her promise been fulfilled. Mr Oswald and Lucy returned to the Manse; but Ludovic was yet too ill to be removed. His wife watched him night and day. A couch was placed by his sick-bed, in which she slept, or lay awake, alive to every sigh of pain or feverish anxiety. Happier far was she than any other bride in the whole world; and the same ring was now worn that she had kept, after her marriage had been so miserably dissolved; the same locket was near her heart, containing Ludovic's hair, which he had given her when first he wooed her in her virgin beauty. With an angel thus dwelling for ever before his eyes, no wonder that he once more desired life; while his wife's virtue and piety, even in this life, had now met their best and dearest reward.

Mrs Oswald, for so Richard, Harriet, and Frances, now called her, although Miss Wedderburne used still that of "Margaret Lyndsay," had several visits to pay before she and her husband returned to Nether-Place. She walked down the lane, and looked, not without tears, into the window of the small room in which she had once been so happy; in which her mother, Esther, and poor Marion had died. She went into several houses, to see old friends. Some of these friends were dead—some gone elsewhere—but others she

found, and none that were not happy to take hold of her hand. Some vague rumours of her strange misfortunes had reached this obscure by-place. But she told them that she was happy, and that her husband was recovering his health; and they asked no further questions. The portion of her life that had been past here could never be cut off from her being, and all its tenderest remembrances rose before her like realities. God had not forsaken the Orphan.

Braehead had been in her dreams many thousand times, both during her period of perfect bliss—of utter misery—and of imperfect or complete resignation. But never had it appeared more beautiful, in the dreams either of bright or dim imagination, than it now was, when again shown to her eyes just as it existed, with no changes but those of time working silently in the seasons of years, or brought over it by the hands of men obeying the altered circumstances of their condition. Margaret had walked there alone—without even her friend, Miss Wedderburne—and she had enjoyed the delight of reperusing all its characters the same as they were before—or at least perplexing her with no violent erasures. She knew the bushes where the linnet had fed its young; the broom of which she had formed garlands for herself and her sisters; the little dells where they sat or played; the wood into whose gloom they had feared to go far with their infant or girlish steps. Nor was the human life that breathed there in any respect painfully changed. In

the quiet ongoings of that little world, there had no doubt been stoppage and decay; but most of the hearths burned as before; and the memory of her own family was not extinct. Honest John Walker, his wife and children, were still in their comfortable hut; and "Lord bless me—Margaret Lyndsay"—was a heartfelt salutation that came sweetly upon her ear. Mrs Walker set a chair for her with a smiling face; and when she brought out a homely refreshment, the bread was in a Basket which blind Esther had made. Jessie Walker was now a pretty lassie of fifteen; and glad and proud, too, were her parents to agree that she should go with Mrs Oswald to Nether-Place, as her friend and servant. A gentle mirth was over their tea-drinking, not disturbed by the recollections of the honest and kind-hearted master of the house, who had taken Margaret and her mother in his cart to Glasgow, when Walter Lyndsay was lying on his death-bed.

Margaret returned from Braehead with a heart strengthened by the remembrance of her early days, and carried with her into the mansion of Miss Wedderburne the sweet charities of humanity, which with her had been so long cherished and warmed by the fire-side of a lowly cottage.

CHAPTER L.

ONCE more Nether-Place was inhabited by Ludovic Oswald and his wife. They arrived there quietly, and in the dusk of evening, and were welcomed home by their happy and devoted old domestic. But, in one single day, the news of their return spread over all the parish, and every heart was stirred with strong delight on such a restoration. It was almost like a rising from the dead; and the extraordinary circumstances of Ludovic's re-appearance lost nothing in wonder from the awakened imaginations of his simple neighbours. The very remembrance even of his transgressions was swallowed up in the joy of knowing that he was alive, and to remain among them all the rest of his days; and although his friends were deterred by many thoughtful feelings from crowding in upon him at Nether-Place, yet the Manse was visited every hour of the day for several weeks, by young and old, congratulating their beloved and respected Pastor. He did not shut himself up from their homely sympathies; but returned their visits at their own houses, and was seen walk-

ing about with Lucy every evening, with an expression of countenance that had been long unknown, and like the Mr Oswald of former times, glad, cheerful, and communicative, and ready to receive and give salutations to every one he met on foot-path or highway. Hilarity and joyousness were observable every where, and Casterton did not seem to hold within its bounds one person desponding or disconsolate.

A new life began at Nether-Place. Ludovic Oswald—the brave bold soldier—was an invalid—and was seen sometimes alone, but generally with his wife, walking slowly, and with feeble steps, over his fields, or towards the Manse. He was greatly broken down, and his wounds, never perhaps to be healed, made him look, at the early age of twenty-six, almost like a veteran of fifty. Margaret, too, had lost the elasticity of her steps, and the beautiful airy being moved now with matronly gait, and wore an expression of resigned melancholy that touched even the rudest mind. But every one who saw her felt assured that she was happy—happier than ever; and her smiles, when she accosted her kind neighbours, evidently came from a heart that calmly and deeply enjoyed the lot assigned her by Heaven. She did not forget one of her acquaintances, rich or poor; her charities flowed on silently as before; and neither her past misery, nor her present happiness, had extinguished one thought formerly awakened by the griefs or joys of her fellow-creatures.

The beautiful Farm of Nether-Place was now in the

hands of its proprietor. In youth he had known rural affairs, and now, in overlooking the peaceful labours of the field, and in planning improvements over his small estate, that mind found rest that had so long been disturbed by the sins, and sorrows, and sufferings of an agitated world. The pure air inspired fresh health, and made the current of his blood flow lightly on. Month after month his appearance became more like long life; and on each successive Sabbath, he received the congratulations of his friends, who spoke not to deceive him, but to express their own satisfaction in his increased alacrity and vigour. The colour returned faintly to Margaret's cheeks; and one and all declared that she was more beautiful than ever, for there was something in her faded face when it smiled, that was felt to be suitable to her whole character and lot, and clothed it even to unthinking hearts with a peculiar and appropriate loveliness.

Thus month after month—year after year—went on, and it was almost forgotten in the parish that young Mr and Mrs Oswald had ever been unhappy. There is something in affliction, especially if combined with sin or error, that the mind wishes not to remember, or to hear recalled. And here the presence of happiness and of goodness obliterated all such recollections, and allowed no thoughts to enter within the avenue of Nether-Place but those of kindness and respect. Ludovic had outlived all his frailties—they were like the withered leaves of a past season, and now the branches

were again green, and every good affection grew beneath their shelter. The past was an almost forgotten dream—the present was a vivid reality.

But within the house of Nether-Place there was a happiness of which those without could know little or nothing. For that which others forgot, Ludovic and Margaret well remembered; and the growth of years could not fill up the furrows which suffering had ploughed into their lives. He could not, wished not, to forget that he had been a man of many sins; and he held the uncertain tenure of his life from God with a sacred fear. He did not deliver himself up to a wild enthusiasm—he did not fling himself helplessly upon Divine mercy, without humbly striving to feel and act as religion required—he did not trust in the promises held forth to sinners, without knowing that better thoughts had gained an ascendancy over those that had so long been too familiar—he did not vainly conceive that all alliance had been broken off between himself of other years, and himself of the present season—he still knew that hauntings from the past were with him still, to tempt and try—and he humbly suspected even his penitence, lest it might be only remorse for guilt, or regret of pleasure. But deeply convinced that his frailties clung to him still, and that the seeds of sin were smothered, not utterly crushed, in his nature, he made small pretences before man to superior piety, and so much the more humbly did he prostrate himself before God.

There was, therefore, no loud merriment or boisterous mirth, even on the most joyful occasions at Nether-Place; one settled spirit prevailed there, which nothing but utter oblivion of the past could destroy; but that spirit was not incompatible with profound happiness. In process of years, a new bliss sprung up in their lives. For a son and a daughter were born, and God preserved them both unharmed in smiling infancy. She who had been so dutiful a daughter—so affectionate a sister—and so loving a wife—what a heaven was it to her to be a mother! Her own little Walter and Alice, one in her arms, and the other playing at her feet, repaid her over and over again, every single day, for all the miseries she had ever suffered. All other kinds of affection may become too excessive; but that of a mother for her innocent children, nature consecrates, even although it should overflow the whole entire soul. Margaret had often upbraided herself with not loving better little Ludovic—the son of Hannah Blantyre—who lived with his grandfather, and cheered the old man with the light of a fresh dawning affection. But too many sad emotions had hitherto been gathered round his harmless head. Now she comprehended him too in the expansion of her maternal bosom; and never was she so satisfied of the perfect restoration of her husband's character, as when she saw him absorbed in his children's smiles, and fondling them upon his knees. Their innocence appealed to all his best renovat-

ed feelings; and he who had been once so much the slave of selfish passions, and their easy prey, now lived in the perfect peace of those affections which carry a man out of himself, and attach him by mysterious links finely spun, but strong as adamant, to the beauty of innocence.

Sailors do not live always upon the seas. And now Laurence Lyndsay came to Nether-Place a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He and sweet Lucy Oswald had not forgotten each other, although no promise had been made, nor even love avowed. But they had been true to each other, without any such declaration; and on the day that Margaret's boy completed his fifth year, they were married. The sailor had a comfortable independence; and although he did not think of quitting his profession, he thought naturally, and not unwisely, that the future might take care of itself, and that he and Lucy, in the small cottage of Mill-Nook, might be happy for a few months, without remembering the sound of the sea.

The happiness which Margaret now enjoyed with her husband was not, they both knew, to last for ever, nor even for many years. His health never had been, never could be, restored. He himself had many intimations incommunicable to others of approaching dissolution; and he took his departure from this world so quietly, and with so little pain, that Margaret, who was sitting by his bed, and not immediately fearing the event, knew not the minute when he

breathed his last. She had been reading to him from the Bible which had been given to her by Michael Grahame; and, pausing to speak about a passage, she looked towards him, and saw that his spirit had gone, as she humbly trusted, to Heaven. His father had been for some time prepared to expect his death; and the old man was perfectly resigned to lose his son. It was over his sins and his frailties that he had wept most bitterly in other years; but his son had become a new man; and, as he died in the faith, his old father, without great anguish, stood by the grave and saw his Ludovic buried. Over a braver man the volleying musketry had never sounded a requiem; but the death he had often sought on the field of battle had come at last like a shadow over him on a peaceful bed, and Ludovic Oswald was interred, after all his wanderings, in the burial-ground of his native parish.

Happiness did not forsake Margaret, now that she was a widow. The time once was, that she would have wept in inconsolable anguish over the grave of her Ludovic. But time and change had fitted him for Heaven, while gradual and unpainful decay had loosened the bands of this mortal life. Therefore she lived on, undisturbed, calm, even glad, with her beautiful children. She did not load herself with widow's weeds; but all her life wore simple and unostentatious mourning, which showed, that with the hope of meet-

ing her husband in Heaven was united the memory of the years past with him on earth. Her daughter Alice was now a sweet, gentle, thoughtful girl of twelve years—reminding Margaret, by her placid face, meek eyes, and composed manner, of her own sainted Mother. Walter, two years older, was all that her heart could wish. Sedate, studious, and fond of home, he excited no fears in her bosom lest he should ever leave her far, or seek his fortune in foreign countries. The gentle boy sought the society of his grandfather, and thought no life like that of a clergyman. Mr Oswald scarcely showed greater symptoms of old age than he had done many years ago, and educated Walter entirely himself for College. "Little Ludovic," as he had always been called, had turned out a fine, spirited, adventurous lad, and by the kind offices of Mr Wedderburne, was sent out a cadet to India—full of hope and joy. Miss Wedderburne and her sisters, who now bore other names, in their own happiness, gave every delightful proof of an unfading friendship. All was peace—at the Manse—the Mill-Nook—and Nether-Place; and Margaret, who had so piously fulfilled her duties to her parents, became in turn the object of tenderest affection to her children. Their virtue and piety was her reward from the God who had proved her in affliction, and who now shed the light of his holiest comfort on her head, which, though not old, was yet waxing grey, and seemed, in its serene

and solemn beauty, not to be destined for a long life here, but an eternity of bliss hereafter.

When soon or late they reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May they rejoice, no wanderer lost,
A family in Heaven

THE END.

Printed by George Ramsay & Co.
Edinburgh, 1823.

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